

A Local Music Magazine

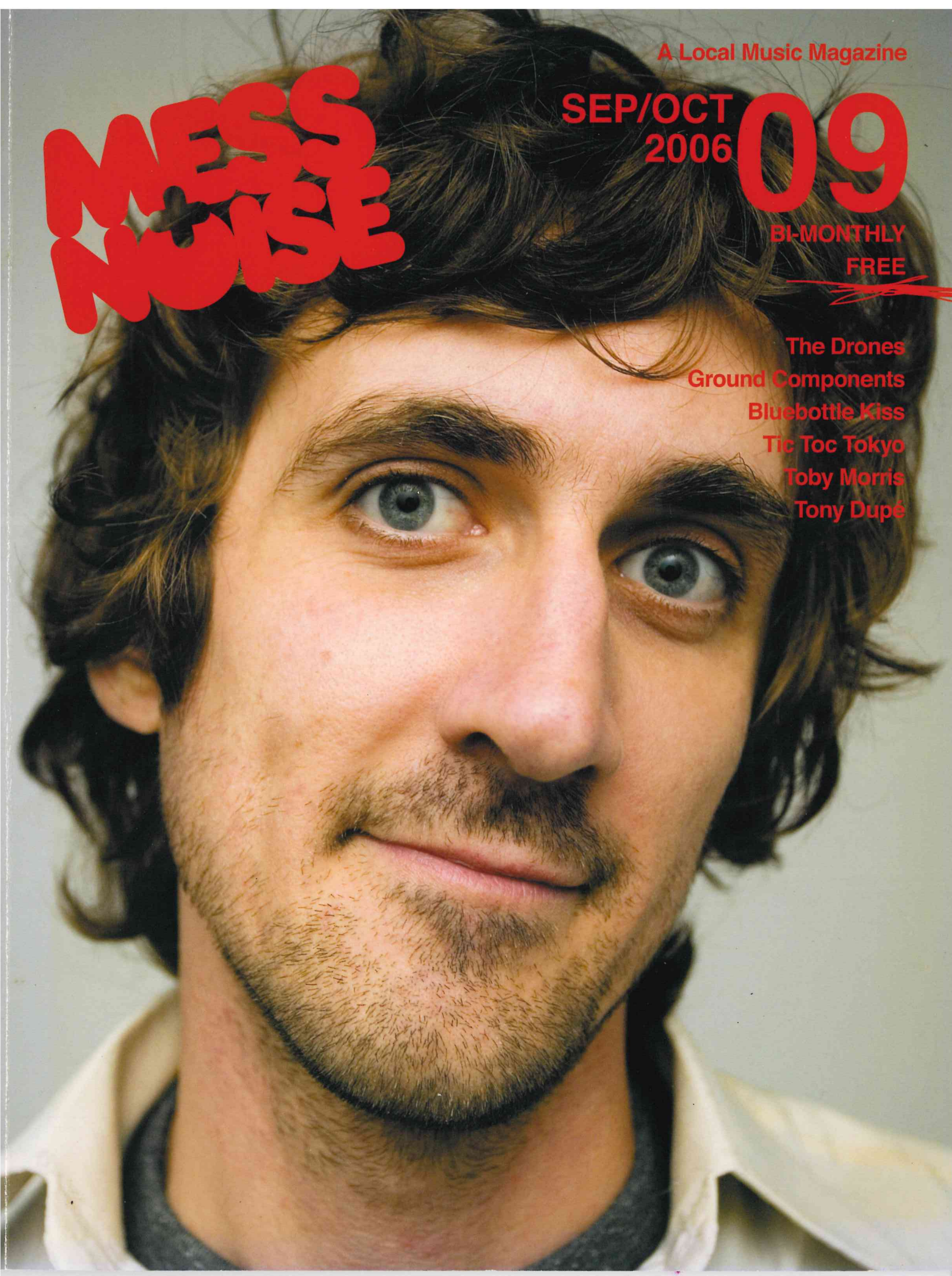
SEP/OCT
2006

09

BI-MONTHLY
FREE

MESS NOISE

The Drones
Ground Components
Bluebottle Kiss
Tic Toc Tokyo
Toby Morris
Tony Dupé



Releases

Slumber Party ~ Musik
The Radio Dept. ~ Pet Grief
Supersystem ~ A Million Microphones
Mika Miko ~ C.S.Y.L.A.B.F.
Erase Errata ~ Nightlife
Smooosh ~ Free To Stay
Camera Obscura ~ Let's Get Out Of This Country

Touring

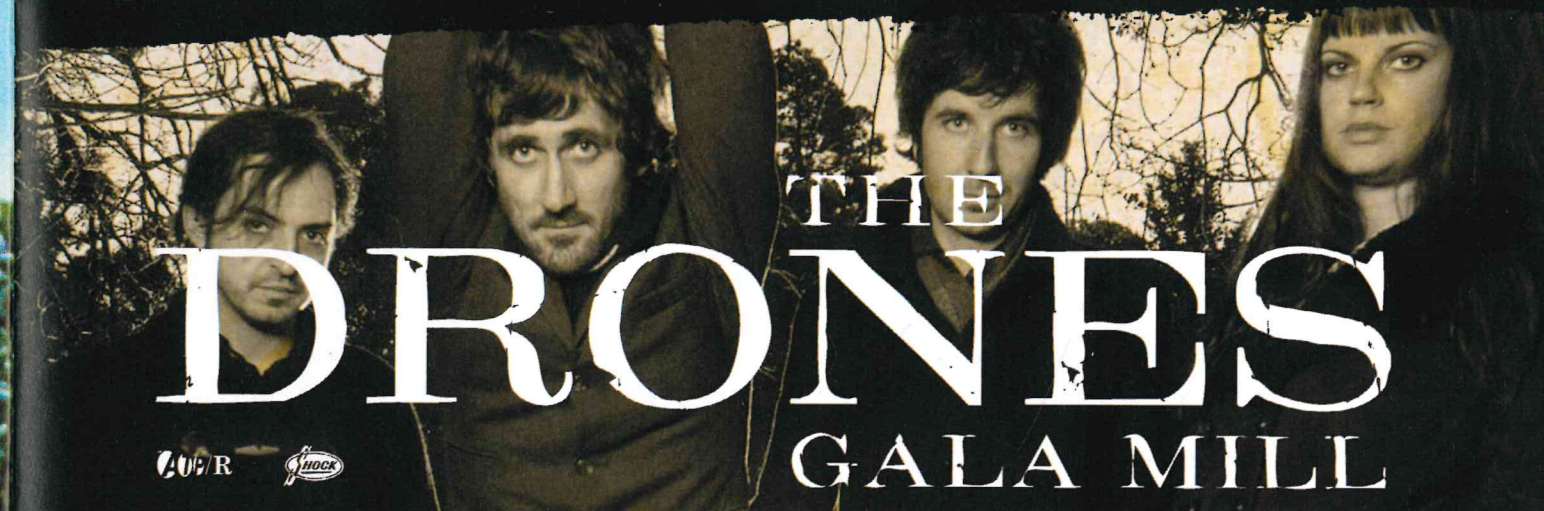
The Rogers Sisters (October)
Calvin Johnson and Woelv (November)
Erase Errata (November)
The Blow (November)
Cansei de Ser Sexy (January)

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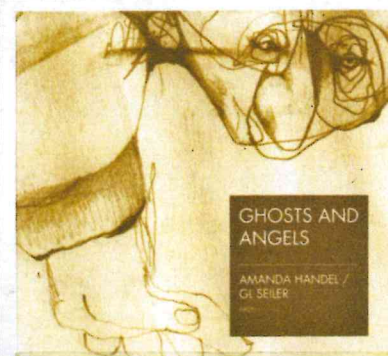
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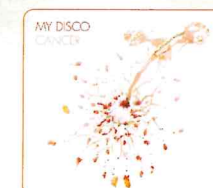
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Bi-Monthly

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+ NOISE**

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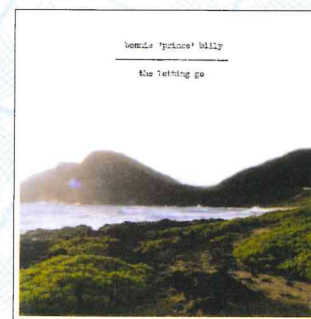
ALBUM LAUNCH

SEP 29
SPANISH CLUB MELBOURNE

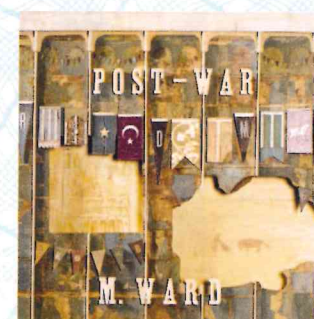


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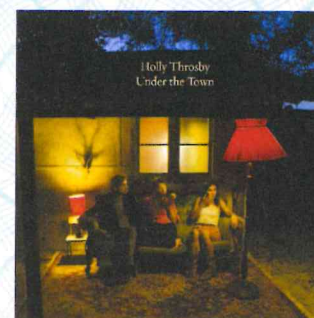
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photo Kane Bann

Greetings From ...

AGM MINUTES - M+N BOWLS CLUB

Present: Danny Bos (Chairman), Kristy Milliken (Secretary), Samone B (Treasurer) and Ben Gook (board member)

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all present to the *Mess+Noise* Bowls Club's Annual General Meeting and called for apologies.

1.2 Ben Gook offered apologies for Marcus Teague, absent in Broome.

2.1 The Secretary started to read the minutes of the previous AGM, but stopped when it was pointed out by the Treasurer that not one thing contained in them had come to pass

2.2 The Chairman pointed out that he had suggested that would happen, hence the

Board had in fact gotten one thing right.

2.3 The Secretary seconded this, although no-one had actually made a motion.

3.1 The Chairman welcomed Ben Gook to the Board and noted that he would be a valuable asset both to the Almanac and Men's Fours team, which was hoping for a strong showing in the night pennant series.

3.2 Ben Gook noted for the record that he felt out of place wearing the regulation bowls uniform of cream pants and crisply ironed polo shirt.

4.1 The Chairman called on the treasurer to report on the new issue.

4.2 The Treasurer reported that the new issue was full of fine images and stories, many of them long and involved, yet always

compelling, about musicians and their associates, who associated the jack with a song by the band AC/DC. Some of them also had strange ideas about the kitty.

4.3 The Treasurer mentioned The Drones, Bluebottle Kiss, Tony Dupe, Love Outside Andromeda, Ground Components and many more.

4.4 Ben Gook wondered if his bowls outfit was really white or actually an off-cream tone.

4.5 The Secretary pointed out that sometimes in life everyone, not just the ladies, has to bring a plate.

5.1 The Chairman adjourned the meeting.



Behind The Cover

Photo By Cecelia Bedford
Modelled by Gareth Liddiard (The Drones)

Taken at CCPhotography Studio in Prahran, Melbourne on September 7, 2006



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VESSELS

"Wolf & Cub rip a hole in the rock scene" DAZED & CONFUSED UK

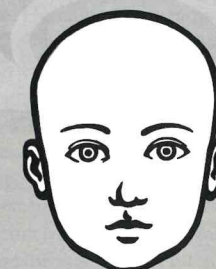
"Monstrous twin drums, club like bass... an awesome prospect" ARTROCKER



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Jamie conducting a 13 piece band at the *Doubt Seeds* Launch, August 2006 at the Manning Bar Sydney.

Photo by Sam Webster

Heart/Noise: The Ballad of Bluebottle Kiss

Jamie Hutchings looks back on 12 years
of blood, sweat and fears in the studio

Story by Emmy Hennings

Photos by Amy Walters, Matt Attlee, Sam Webster and Warwick Baker

“I think that between your heart and your mouth there’s a weird passage, but music is a melding, a marriage between noise and words that makes sense, in a nonsensical kind of way. It’s a contradiction, but that’s why it’s a unique language.” – Jamie Hutchings

The album fades up on a dispute between two voices; a rapid-fire exchange in flat Australian accents.

“It’s too close to the mic,” says the first.

“It sounds good, though,” comes the argumentative response.

“Yeah, I know,” is the placation, “but not *too* close ...”

“Starting again,” comes the command, straight over the top.

With that abrupt cue, the second voice begins a song without further pause, launching off along a finger-plucked acoustic melody with steady momentum but slightly uneven execution, like a trip along an old, bitumen highway. The singer tells us that he’s driving south, and that, “Neil Young’s on the radio/singing something tragic”, which suits because the song is drawn from a similar writerly tradition – one in which a lone traveller pits themselves against a landscape that is both a solace and a menace. We learn that “the summer sky is a well-done charcoal black”, a detail that in other blunter hands could sound rudely apocalyptic, but here conveys exactly nothing more or less than the relentless, baking heat of a shadeless road at midday.

He *is* close to the mic, the singer, which means that long after the fact the recording still conveys a particular immediacy, as if the song were unfolding just over to the left of your shoulder. Despite the closeness of the basic elements – voice and guitar – there is an expansiveness to the sound, a spacious melancholy built from the hiss of half-inch reel tape; the mid-distant swish of passing traffic; the clatter of drumsticks and, of course, the twisting emotional geography of the lyrics, where a dark sky mirrors a dark road and a dark heart. The further the song travels out the more emphatic it becomes, as if loss and becoming lost are the only places where stories might actually be found. “Drove past some rusted burnt-out shack/There’s beauty in the madness” runs the last verse, like an inside-out affirmation, before ending with a chorus that gives the song its title:

‘Beautifully Tragic’. And then the singer breaks off with an insouciant sniff into the microphone, withdrawing from the song, as if to say, “What’s next?”

What was next was a long, as yet unfinished journey for the Sydney band known as Bluebottle Kiss. They remain one of this country’s strangest, loveliest, most enigmatic bands; a stubborn presence on the local radar for more than twelve years, unswayed by fast-changing fashions or by the vicious, crash-and-burn career cycles that characterise the music industry. With the recent release of *Doubt Seeds*, the Bluebottle Kiss discography stands at six albums, six EPs and nine singles stuffed with B-sides, a testament to the band’s restless sense of exploration.

“There’s nothing worse than a band who produce a really stellar first album and then everything else they do pales in comparison,” says Jamie Hutchings, singer, songwriter, and consistent musical force behind Bluebottle Kiss.

Hutchings sits opposite me on a winter’s afternoon in the harbourside offices of his current record label, Nonzero, with a face as remarkably unchanged over the years as his singing voice. With his floppy haircut and penchant for onstage outfits in variations on brown – chocolate velvet jackets, paired with neatly pressed teal shirts – he could still pass for twentysomething, and that singing voice remains the kind of sound that some might refer to as a ‘deal breaker’: throaty, sometimes rasping, pitting emotion over accuracy. But it’s a unique voice, one that never lacks in courage or reach, and that’s the kind of thing that is important to Hutchings.

“For me, there’s no space for caution in music,” he says emphatically. The next record is always “something different, taking a new direction, whether that’s sideways or forward or wherever.”

Bluebottle Kiss have always worked at their own pace, but by no means has it been a tardy one. Hutchings is a genuinely prolific songwriter who is often writing songs two albums in advance of what’s being recorded, and though many of their records are deleted or otherwise difficult to find, this only makes the process of discovering them all the more intriguing. “I think it’s nice to discover a band for the first time and realise that they’ve got a whole bunch of material you can go back and forage through,” says Hutchings of his voluminous back catalogue.

So let’s go back.

Bluebottle Kiss began recording their first album, 1995’s *Higher Up The Firetrails* – of which ‘Beautifully Tragic’ is the opening track – in late 1994, on the day that Jamie Hutchings turned 23. Producer Wayne Connolly recorded it in four days at Bondi Pavilion theatre, “because I was determined not to use a recording studio”, Hutchings says. ‘Beautifully Tragic’ survived in the Bluebottle Kiss setlist as late as 2005, but today Hutchings sums up his band’s debut as “pretty funny”, and laughs good-humouredly when I describe it to him as naive. Even back then, he wasn’t entirely happy with it. “By the time we recorded it, I was already over the songs and I was already writing better songs ... When I listened to it back the first time I thought: ‘This sounds like Tumbleweed’.”

More than any other Bluebottle Kiss recording, *Higher Up The Firetrails* sounds of its time, caught indelibly in that mid-90s moment when distorted, down-tuned guitars ruled the airwaves. Not that Bluebottle Kiss were getting much radio play: even compared to their grunge peers, their sound was dense and wilfully difficult. A long-time admirer of rock experimentalists such as Sonic Youth and The Church, Hutchings was determined that his band would not be an easy sell.

“I really wanted people to be for us or against us,” he says, “I really liked the idea of having some sort of legacy. I liked the idea that even if we didn’t make any money, people would hear the music and it would remind them of something. I wanted to be part of people’s lives rather than just entertainment.”

Silverchair, Something For Kate and, er, Ammonia became the labelmates of Bluebottle Kiss when the band were signed to Murmur, the boutique ‘alternative’ imprint of Sony, during the post-Seattle A&R gold rush. Their colleagues went on to platinum records and massive tours. Bluebottle Kiss did not. “We were lucky to make as many records as we did [on Murmur],” Hutchings laughs. “John O’Donnell [then head of Murmur, now head of EMI] had a real soft spot for the band. When he signed silverchair and they did so well, the label were like: ‘You’re fantastic! You can do whatever you want!’ So he said, ‘I’m gonna sign Bluebottle Kiss’.”

Cue the noise of Sony executives clearing their throats in disbelief. *Higher Up The Firetrails* swung from the delicate ‘Beautifully Tragic’ to the riffastic ‘Paean For Sandpaper

Timeline

1993
Bluebottle Kiss formed by Jamie Hutchings in Bondi, Sydney, with Ben Fletcher (bass) and Peter Noble (drums)

First gig at Harbourside Brasserie

1994
Demo tape *Sonic Elevator Music For the Masses* circulated

Band signed to Murmur

1995
Higher Up The Firetrails (Murmur) released. Not exactly a false start, just a slightly misguided one

Double Yellow Tarred EP (Murmur) – A quantum leap forward in confidence and quality

1996
Fear Of Girls (Murmur) – includes the singles ‘Rust and the Time’, ‘Helping You Hate Me’ and ‘Autumn Comes Too Soon’. Messy and flawed, but nevertheless beautiful

1997
Drummer Peter Noble leaves, replaced by Richard Coneliano

Somnambulist Homesick Blues EP (Murmur) compiled, an odds n’ sods collection that’s more curious than compelling – ‘Generic Teen’ is playlisted by Triple J

Band dropped by Murmur

1998
‘Tap Dancing On the Titanic’ EP (Troy Horse) – worthwhile for the eclectic B-sides, in particular

1999
Patient (Citadel) – includes the single ‘Return To the City Of Folded Arms’ and title track from the *Girl Genius* EP. Precise, poised and perfectly executed; not a note or a minute wasted

2000
Band picked up by US label Spin, tour the US

2001
Gangsterland EP and ‘Ounce Of Your Cruelty’ single (Nonzero)

Ben Grounds joins on bass; Ben Fletcher moves to guitar

2002
Revenge Is Slow (Nonzero) – includes the singles ‘Father’s Hands’, ‘Ounce Of Your Cruelty’ and title track from the *Gangsterland* EP. It’s a band at their melodic peak: strong tunes, beautiful arrangements

Revenge Is Slow released on Laughing Outlaw (UK) and In Music We Trust (US)

... continued next page

Mouth’, although Hutchings declares his favourite track to be ‘Requiem For The Holden’, a squealing, surf-rock echo chamber. “That was the first song I ever wrote that I felt really good about,” he adds, “and I still think that it was the first time where we found our sound.”

But the variety-hour dabbblings of *Higher Up The Firetrails* were to be nothing compared to the fierce eclecticism of its hasty follow-up, the 1995 EP *Double Yellow Tarred*. Compared to their debut, “it’s twenty times better,” says Hutchings, who remains justifiably proud of the release. “We never play any songs from it live [now], because I think it’s of a certain time, but it’s one of my favourites. I think it’s one of the best things we ever did.”

Those looking for a way through the wide sonic terrain recently covered by *Doubt Seeds* could do worse than seek out a copy of *Double Yellow Tarred*, which is motivated by a similar desire to explore several different, self-contained musical universes. The EP initially pushes a listener down the rabbit hole with ‘Raymond’, a fable about “a mid-life crisis at 21” rent in half by the revving of feedback and jump-cut television samples; a lullaby which steps off into sonic freefall and creates a rather convincing impression of a troubled mind imploding.

“We had *huge* fights over ‘Raymond’, over that middle section,” remembers Hutchings. “Everyone was like, ‘This is ridiculous! What are you doing? You’re wrecking a perfectly good song!’”

In a way, the chaos of its opening track reflected the band’s internal relationships during the making of *Double Yellow Tarred*: Hutchings and his fellow band members Ben Fletcher (bass) and Peter Noble (drums) were barely talking. “The communication within the band was terrible,” Hutchings comments, “but I took advantage of that. They’d storm off and I did exactly everything that I wanted to do.”

But sometimes the “shambles” of recording coalesced into something truly special, where the strengths of each Bluebottle Kiss member were judiciously highlighted. ‘Elmer’s Gone’ is one such moment, a languorous, country-tinged reverie which, like a distant cousin to Underground Lovers’ ‘Las Vegas’, has a vastness that, “feels like you’ve suddenly parked in the desert,” as Hutchings describes it.

There are two geographical *leitmotifs* in the Bluebottle Kiss catalogue: roads and oceans, the former of which will always be particularly resonant for any band that spends countless hours driving up and down Australia’s

highways. “I remember when *Double Yellow Tarred* came out that someone described it as ‘very Australian sounding’,” Hutchings says. “We were doing lots of overnight drives and you’re in that headspace, especially at that age, where you haven’t got any real responsibilities, and you feel like you could just stumble out of the van and never be seen again. You’ve got nothing else to live for but the band ... You’d be in Hay or somewhere and there’d be so many stars and it would be so quiet, and it always struck me as so powerful. I just loved it.”

“I’m a signpost on a highway/I’m so switched off/I’m a flatline/I’m double yellow tarred,” sings Hutchings on ‘Elmer’s Gone’, harmonising with Fletcher against the slow beat of a tambourine, in a two-vocal approach that was soon to become a trademark of the Bluebottle Kiss sound. “Ben was always such a great singer, a very natural singer straight away,” comments Hutchings. Their vocal harmonies evolved partly because “I wanted him to be more involved. He was a very good performer and really loved being on stage, more than I did, so it made sense to work to his strengths.”

Alongside Crow’s *Halcyon Days* and Gaslight Radio’s *Torchin’ Towns, Hankerin’ Homes*, *Double Yellow Tarred* remains one of the great, ‘lost’ Australian EPs of the 1990s, a record brimming with a confidence that belies its tumultuous origins. “What I like about that record is that it’s so uncompromising,” Hutchings says today. “It almost feels like it wasn’t made by us – it has its own identity.”

When Tim Rogers asked in his plaintive tenor, “Now what kind of mess have you gone and got yourself into?” on the title track to You Am I’s 1996 album *Hourly Daily*, the answer could have been *Fear Of Girls*. Released in the same year, *Fear Of Girls* is the nightmarish underside to *Hourly Daily*’s sun-warmed Sydney lives. Where *Hourly Daily* is an afternoon of blue sky and telegraph wires, *Fear Of Girls* is a freezing, rainy night spent waiting for a train that never arrives. An exploration of “suburban surrealism”, the songs are set in darkened rooms besieged by rising tides, ticking clocks and chattering insects that prevent sleep. “It is quite claustrophobic,” concedes Hutchings of this second Bluebottle Kiss album.

Yet beginning with its cover image of a ghost child perched on the seawall of Coogee Beach, *Fear Of Girls* is also the band’s most epic, oceanic record, in many ways an attempt to capture the “ferocious” nature of the band’s hometown. “I do think of us as having a sense of place in what we do,” Hutchings says. “Sydney is a coastal, harbour town: there’s



a lot of isolated spots to escape to, like the northern or southern heads of the harbour which are kind of forbidding, and where the ocean’s really ferocious. I used to spend a lot of time wandering around those spots when we started, just wasting time or thinking of ideas for songs. I think some of that is in our music.”

A true cult album, *Fear Of Girls* is, in the very best sense, a spectacular failure. At fifteen tracks and 65 minutes it is “a sprawl” which in some ways went against Hutchings’ better instincts. “I don’t like long records,” he comments. “I find it hard to listen to a record for more than 45 minutes.” However, *Fear Of Girls* represented the first, and, in many ways, the only chance that Bluebottle Kiss had to “make a proper studio record with a proper big budget,” and they took it, working with American producer Jack Endino, who had endeared himself to the band through his work with eccentric American indie band Afghan Wigs.

Despite its lack of overall cohesion – a weakness that would spur Hutchings on to make the next few Bluebottle Kiss records “very tight, exploring one idea” – *Fear Of Girls* contains some of the band’s best and (for their long-term fans) most beloved songs, most of them gut-wrenching in their raw, emotional vulnerability. ‘Barbed Wire Star’ is an unadorned acoustic ballad that sounds like it was taped in the world’s loneliest bedroom,

while the whiplash terror of ‘Outside Are The Dogs’ underlined the album’s atmosphere of encroaching darkness with the bitterest irony: “I’m not as scared as I once was,” runs the opening line.

The best and the most ferocious moment on *Fear Of Girls* is to be found on the album’s penultimate track, ‘Ice On the Road’, the origins of which lay in a sleepy instrumental on *Double Yellow Tarred*.

“Once, I was dozing and dreamt that I was kind of levitating through all these icy townships, and the ‘Ice On the Road’ motif was playing through it, kind of creepy and disjointed,” Hutchings explains. “As soon as I woke, I recorded it on my 4-track; it was raining so I recorded that too and then it

“John [O’Donnell] really thought, ‘OK, I’ve gotta try and make this band sell some records.’ He got me to play solo at a lot of different record company dos ... They were like toothpaste conventions.”



Photos by (top left clockwise) Ben Grounds, Amy Walters, Warwick Baker, Warwick Baker

thundered, synchronicity ... All that is on the version on *Double Yellow Tarred* which is that 4-track version.”

The version that appears on *Fear Of Girls* is a much grander affair: it’s the sound of a band overreaching themselves, and succeeding. The spidery guitar motif has strengthened into something metallic, yet abrasive, like ancient rust. A piano helps pick out the central melody, and, at first, the arrangement circles around a foreboding quiet, truly like a back road in the winter’s dawn. “This is the season of confession,” Hutchings sings, tying the exterior and interior landscape together.

Although the subject matter may be chilly, the music itself is warm-blooded, as the band extend themselves to a full-tilt epic, replete

2002

Drummer Richard Coneliano leaves; Hutchings and Fletcher tour the UK as a duo

2003

Drummer Simon Fuhrer joins

Come Across (Nonzero) – includes the single ‘Everything Begins And Ends At Exactly The Right Time’ and title track from the *Last Playboy In Town* EP; album listed as Triple J Album of the Week. A disc that’s confused as a whole, but redeemed by some stellar tracks

2004

Last Playboy In Town EP (Nonzero)

Drummer Simon Fuhrer leaves, replaced by Jared Harrison; Ben Fletcher leaves

Come Across released in the US; band tour the US and UK with Ben Grounds now on guitar, Ross Dickie on bass

2005

Fear Of Girls reissued by Murmur

‘A Little Bit Of Light’ single (Nonzero)

2006

Band play South by Southwest in Austin, Texas

Doubt Seeds (Nonzero), includes the single ‘A Little Bit Of Light’ and title track from the EP *The Women Are An Army*. Quite simply swaggering, loud and ludicrously ambitious. A great success

Bluebottle Kiss play a handful of one-off shows (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane) to showcase *Doubt Seeds* with a thirteen-piece band

with horn section provided by Hutchings’ father Lee, a professional jazz player. The lyrics snatch desperately at something disappearing over the horizon, a friendship gone wrong: “You’re gonna smoulder til someone loves you,” sings Hutchings, and then the music catches fire: “And I’ll be your true friend, but that just won’t do”.

“I’d been listening a lot to Van Morrison’s *Astral Weeks* and really admiring his freewheeling, soulful singing style,” says Hutchings of the impassioned, cracking vocal performance that would make the song, “so I started rambling over the instrumental. It was the first time I really let loose and sung; it was very un-indie rock at the time, which made me feel good.”

‘Indie rock’ is not a mentality that Hutchings has ever had much time for. “When we started we were very ‘cool’ and all the indie people were getting into us,” Hutchings recalls, “and we got offered a few indie deals but they were always really ... watery. And then we had a major label deal come along ... but the vibe from the whole scene was just like ‘sell-out’. I felt like we fell out with all those people.”

In a perverse way, the distinct absence of a stellar Bluebottle Kiss sales record actually bought the band a degree of freedom during their days on Murmur, at a time when the band rarely had a manager, booking agent, or any other major label accoutrements. “We didn’t really have any help from anybody else at the time,” explains Hutchings, “so we just

made the records that we wanted to and then got kicked off the label.”

“There were horrible aspects to being on a major,” Hutchings concedes. “Around *Fear Of Girls*, that’s when John [O’Donnell] really thought, ‘OK, I’ve gotta try and make this band sell some records.’ He got me to play solo at a lot of different record company dos ... They were like toothpaste conventions. I went to one on Hayman Island and it was really upsetting. I really found that hard.”

Despite the frosty critical and commercial reception which greeted *Fear Of Girls* upon its release, Bluebottle Kiss were given one last chance on Murmur with the 1997 EP *Somnambulist Homesick Blues*. It didn’t save them. The sweetener of lead track ‘Generic Teen’ aside – a spiky, tongue-in-cheek pop song that earned the band their first significant Triple J airplay – the EP soon dovetailed into a perplexing array of sounds, including the screaming ‘Familiar’ and the twelve-minute dub ‘Immune To Love’.

The band was duly despatched, but at least they had a new drummer, the suitably hard-hitting Richard Coneliano. His joining brought a new sense of stability to a working atmosphere that had been, in Hutchings’ words, “very dysfunctional. Richard actually came to the rescue: he brought a sense of organization to the band. Before that it was impossible. We’d do tours where no one was talking to each other. When Richard came in it became more of a partnership.”

It was at this time that Bluebottle Kiss began garnering a reputation as an impressive live act, one that made the sonic limitations of a trio work to their advantage. “Being a three-piece you have to economise,” comments Hutchings, “The fittest ideas survive.” Their shows during 1998 and 1999 were something to behold: suited up like Peter Fenton’s little brothers, Bluebottle Kiss were tight enough to turn on a dime, with Coneliano and Fletcher providing a pounding, galloping rhythm section that underpinned Hutchings’ scrawling guitar work. The gap between top and bottom ends was wide enough to drive a truck through, but both parts moved in parallel via the perfectly synchronised vocals of Hutchings and Fletcher, who also took to mirroring each other with exaggerated rock moves: star jumps, pirouettes and mock-triumphant dives into the drumkit.

The band was having fun, and their third album, 1999’s *Patient*, was a snapshot of that time. “*Patient* is the one record that really embodies that three-piece sound,” Hutchings says. “It’s essentially a live record – we recorded it in four days. We had to work

really fast because we’d saved up our own money [to do it].”

Released on the stalwart independent label Citadel, *Patient* rolls back the swirling tides of *Fear Of Girls* to reveal a landscape parched and rough under foot, like a front lawn without water. “I saw it once – a summer abstraction ... far off over the tar,” reads a liner note.

Hutchings describes his songwriting style on *Patient* as “semi-autobiographical, but also landscape-orientated,” with a sense of evocation that he’d been aiming for a long time. “It’s like you’re getting an image and putting it underwater,” he elaborates. “You’re kind of blurring it so that, rather than an explanation, you’re transcribing it in a way that might appeal to you in a dream.”

Tracks such as ‘Homeless Blueless’ and ‘Maps To Help You Lose Your Way’ marry a desolate lyrical surrealism to a sparse, muscular sound that is tempered by occasional moments of sweetness. ‘Girl Genius’ is a prime example of the latter, a hauntingly melodic, magic-realist fable that represents one of Hutchings’ first successful forays into character study: “Your town is full of goblins, crooks and murder/your mother thinks you love the next door neighbour/your record player speaks to you all evening ...” Part love song, part cautionary tale, and embellished with piano, cello and the vocal harmonies of Liz Payne (SPDFGH), ‘Girl Genius’ had its impetus partly in Hutchings’ experience of the regional Victorian city of Geelong, where he was to meet his future wife.

“The songs [on *Patient*] weren’t necessarily about that specifically, but inspired by that idea of people like her: a really bright, interesting person being brought up in a place that you’re so at odds with.”

Though the sound of *Patient* was more immediately local than any previous Bluebottle Kiss record, its release also presented them with their first overseas touring opportunity, via the American record label Spin. Travelling from August to October 2000, it was a trip that has gone down in Bluebottle Kiss legend as something very close to an unmitigated disaster. Shortly after the band’s arrival, Spin went bust, leaving them with no tour support; their equipment was held back by Customs; their passports were stolen on the Mexican border, and band members were in a mutinous mood. “Fletcher was wanting to leave for about the fourth time,” recalls Hutchings.

But despite all the trouble, was it a

worthwhile trip? Hutchings smiles ruefully. “As a life experience it was very memorable,” he says, choosing his words slowly, “cause there wasn’t much difference between us and the bum on the street. We’d gone over thinking that there was something at the end of the tunnel, and there was nothing at the end of the tunnel. It was such a tough time. I’d just gotten married too, and my wife came with me.” How romantic. A kind of anti-honeymoon, then? “It was horrible,” declares Hutchings, laughing now with the benefit of six years’ hindsight. “It was very trying on our relationship.”

If nothing else, this ill-fated overseas adventure gave Hutchings a song, born of a visit to his mother’s hometown in Scotland after the “turmoil” of the US tour. Written on an uncle’s borrowed acoustic guitar, the song was ‘Father’s Hands’ and was, according to Hutchings, “one of those songs that wrote itself.”

Simple but enticing, the gentle arrangement of ‘Father’s Hands’ spotlighted Hutchings’ lyrical abilities and, in particular, his growing fascination with, “simple characters; simple people in strange situations and places that are isolated. For some reason that’s often to me an exciting idea to write about.”

Having reassessed and reorganised themselves after their US tour “destroyed a lot of our hopes”, the 2002 Bluebottle Kiss album *Revenge Is Slow* was very much a record given its impetus by the travel narrative that ‘Father’s Hands’ encapsulated. Although some of the songs had been kicking around since the days of *Patient*, *Revenge Is Slow* was a conscious move away from the at-times confronting starkness of that album and is, as Hutchings describes it, “atmospheric, widescreen, very pretty.” It’s also – whether deliberately or not – their most American-sounding record, imbued with a sense of Big Sky-drama best captured on the rollicking, faux-spaghetti western of ‘Gangsterland’.

Revenge Is Slow marked several new developments for Bluebottle Kiss. It was their first album recorded as a four-piece, after Ben Fletcher moved to guitar and Ben Grounds took over on bass; and their first album released on Nonzero, a label set up by their long-term fan, friend and supporter Nick Carr. Shorn of their usual cranky forays into feedback-laden doomsdances, it was also the first Bluebottle Kiss record to garner the band significant radio play and press attention: they even showed up in *Rolling Stone* as a ‘hot new band to watch’, an entry that surely stretched the definition of the word ‘new’.

“I wanted to move away from the indie rock

guitar-bass-drums thing,” explains Hutchings of the lush, layered arrangements on *Revenge Is Slow* that incorporated snatches from old opera and jazz records – records that Hutchings’ musician father had introduced him to as a child. “I was looking at the music which you grow up hating, but that you remember and start to appreciate: Frank Sinatra records and big band records, music from old films ... It was taking those things out of context and putting them in an alien environment.”

The track ‘Peewee’s Dream’, full of crackling vinyl and ghostly piano, was similar to the low-key interludes with which Augie March peppered their own debut album, 2000’s *Sunset Studies*, and was for Hutchings “the closest [in sound] to what I was aiming at in my head: to use found sounds that were beautiful and strange at the same time.”

It was at the height of *Revenge Is Slow*’s well deserved and, for the band, long overdue success (rarely was an album more aptly titled) that drummer Richard Coneliano decided to leave Bluebottle Kiss. He had been not only the rhythmic but also the organisational lynchpin of the band. “He kind of co-managed us,” says Hutchings. “Richard really put his heart and soul into it,” and he was given a rousing send-off gig at Sydney’s Annandale Hotel.

With a Hutchings solo album, *The Golden Coach*, in 2002, and Ben Fletcher’s band The Devoted Few also on the rise; with new drummer Simon Fuhrer joining and quickly leaving, the period between *Revenge Is Slow* and their next release was a transitional time for Bluebottle Kiss. Eight songs spanning this period were documented on *The Cutting Floor*, a bonus mini-album included with initial copies of the fifth Bluebottle Kiss album, 2003’s *Come Across*. Including lost gems such as the shimmering ‘Farewell the Sleeping Trucks’, *The Cutting Floor* was at points more compelling than the album proper.

Although, in subtle ways, *Come Across* is a different, much darker record than *Revenge Is Slow* – “I think the fans we gained with *Revenge Is Slow* we immediately lost again,” muses Hutchings – it was also the first Bluebottle Kiss record to not be a dramatic musical turn about from its immediate predecessor. ‘Scout Hall’ and ‘So Slow’ were further refinements of the poised melodicism that had won the band such critical praise for their previous record, and even the artwork was similar: smooth, abstract greenery.

Where *Come Across* was different was in the “epic, narrative-driven” focus of the lyrics.

The 13 BBK played with onstage at the Sydney launch of *Doubt Seeds*, taking a bow, August 2006

Photo by A Crowd Fan

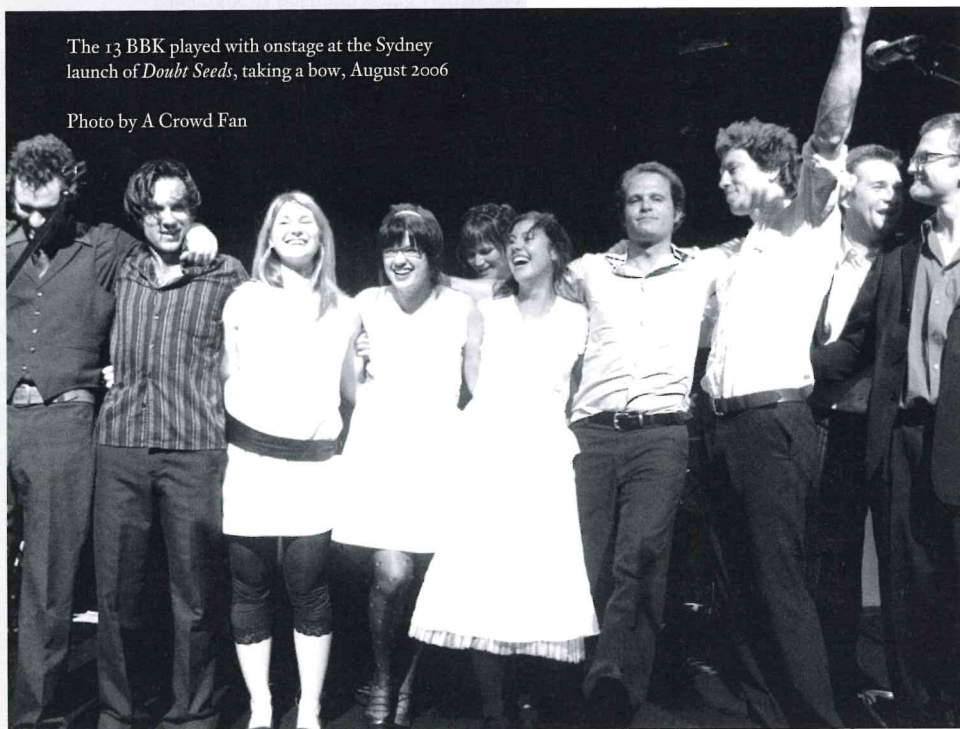




Photo by Matt Attlee

Many songs unfold as stories of impending disaster – car crashes, incarceration, murder.

Hutchings explains: “There was a concept behind that record which was of each person [in the songs] being thrust into a totally alien terrain, and how they cope with it. It’s a theme that runs through the whole record ... people who are suddenly thinking: ‘How did I get here?’ ‘Cross Purpose’ is a good example: ‘How did I get to the point where I’m so desensitised that I’ve killed someone that I knew without even recognising them?’ To me that’s a very strong metaphor for what modern life can be like.”

The song in question is one of the album’s clear highlights: a fratricidal murder ballad that rumbles and thunders along like an approaching storm. If ‘Ice On the Road’ is the Bluebottle Kiss epic-as-confessional, ‘Cross Purpose’ marks the decisive arrival of Hutchings the lyrical storyteller, with an ensemble of characters and atmosphere-setting detail. The music is as blunt as the lyrics are deft, built around tumbling floor toms, fiery guitar and the vocal hollering of the whole band. It’s a sound that clearly echoes not only Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, but also the sadly defunct Sydney trio Browning (featuring vocalist Matt Toohey, now of The Woods Themselves), a group who would often play support to Bluebottle Kiss, and whose 2002 album *And the Ghosts They Howled From the Eye of the Wind* Jamie Hutchings would help produce.

The drama of ‘Cross Purpose’ unfolds “under fascist skies”, and it was no accident that, for a songwriter so concerned with the psychological impact of the Australian

landscape, many of the songs on *Come Across* were infused with a subtle political commentary. In the wake of the 2001 Federal election, during which asylum seekers and terrorist attacks were unpleasantly and unscrupulously (con)fused by a vote-hungry government, the idea of Australia as an isolated and defenceless island gained new currency. The country’s landscape became its vulnerability, and the only protection was containment: redrawn borders, harsh new laws, crowded detention centres. Hutchings introduced ‘Slow Train To A Comfy Jail’ from the stage several times during the *Come Across* tour as being “about Woomera”, while closing track ‘Ministry of Fear’ was a dystopic vision which, at the last minute, cast off its shackles: “And for once in his life somebody said/Fuck the ministry of fear/I thought they had us licked ...”

Partly inspired by his reading of Albert Camus’ anti-fascist allegory *The Plague*, Hutchings says that his newfound political focus on *Come Across* was an attempt to capture “the feeling amongst people and amongst the media in general. In a way it was a non-judgemental take on how people were seeing themselves and their place in the world, in a different socio-political landscape.”

As the world shifted around them, so Bluebottle Kiss faced more upheaval of their own, with Ben Fletcher – the band’s longest-serving member aside from Hutchings – leaving in mid 2004, not long after the two had toured Britain as a duo. Having joined Bluebottle Kiss in 1993 at the startlingly young age of fifteen, Fletcher left eleven years later to concentrate on The Devoted Few, which Richard Coneliano had also joined as drummer.

With a band that has been around for so long, Hutchings now finds himself in the odd – some would say enviable – position of having members in the current Bluebottle Kiss line-up who began as fans of the band. He says that it makes it easier, working out material with musicians who have, “some faith in my ability. When the band first started and I was even less [sic] of a nobody than I am now, people would say ‘Well, who are you to say that it should be done like this?’”

With Ben Grounds now on guitar, Jared Harrison on drums and Ross Dickie playing bass, Hutchings describes the band as having “a really good natural chemistry” that has allowed him to reintroduce songs – *Doubt Seeds* standout ‘The Black Birds’ is one – that previous incarnations of Bluebottle Kiss have struggled with.

“It takes a lot of humility to play somebody else’s songs,” says Hutchings of Bluebottle Kiss as a working entity. “I’ve always been able to rely on my own ideas, but it’s also very much about having the right people to articulate those ideas. Those two things make the band good at any given moment.”

For this year’s *Doubt Seeds*, Hutchings has surrounded himself with many players. There’s the core Bluebottle Kiss members, of course, and then there’s the Hutchings family: father Lee (trumpet), brother Scott (drums) and sister Sophie (piano). There’s a further assortment of horn players and a female choir to provide backing vocals: “It’s a way to be atmospheric without adding a string section ... and a lot cheaper too,” grins Hutchings, referencing the bolstered group singing that has emerged as the band’s lateral solution to replacing the Hutchings/Fletcher harmonies, which were for years a key to the Bluebottle Kiss sound.

Much has been made of the fact that *Doubt Seeds* is in part a ‘musical autobiography’; a way for Hutchings to map out his many influences from John Coltrane to Joy Division, but the album is in no way the crazy-quilt *homage* that such a description might suggest. It’s actually the sound of a band extremely confident with its own musical vocabulary, which in this case is rough and blazing as the logs of a bonfire. *Doubt Seeds* sounds like a Bluebottle Kiss record – huge drums, surf guitar, feedback-as-melody – given a continent-sized boost, assured enough to spread itself over two separate CDs.

“If people think it’s bombastic or over the top, so be it,” Hutchings shrugs. “It’s our sixth album, and I think it was the time to make a really courageous statement, musically.” For the first time since *Fear Of Girls*, Bluebottle

Kiss have, to use Hutchings’ phrase, “done a sprawl”, but the band do not falter.

“Double albums are foolish at the best of times, and when they indulge the band’s long-hidden passion for free jazz, only more so,” remarked American webzine *Stylus*, “But [*Doubt Seeds*] is that rarest of beasts – an ambitious record that lives up to its claims.”

On stage at Sydney University’s Manning Bar at the end of August, free jazz is meeting guitar rock in a head-on collision, as Bluebottle Kiss launch *Doubt Seeds* with true fanfare: a thirteen-piece revolving band playing the album in sequence, from start to finish.

When I speak with Hutchings almost two months earlier, this one-off gig is still in the planning stages, but the singer is envisioning something like Spiritualized’s *Live At the Royal Albert Hall*, “quite symphonic, but also quite noisy and free.” I find it harder to imagine: what Australian band – The Sleepy Jackson are a possible exception – have enough hubris to pull off something like that? And what kind of self-respecting local audience – we’ve always liked our rock bands straight up and no frills – will want to witness it?

Seven years of watching this band play live should have given me more faith. It might be smaller in scale – Manning Bar is hardly Albert Hall, no matter how drunk you are – but the *Doubt Seeds* launch does not lack for Spiritualized-size ambition. And Bluebottle Kiss pull it off: the horn section, the choir, the two drum kits, even a spot of crowd-surfing for Hutchings during the finale, borne aloft on the hands of the crowd. ‘Dream Audit’ – the free jazz moment – is astonishing: a dark, glistening sound thick as oil paint, with one saxophonist playing off against the rest of the band’s harsh, guitar-driven dissonance. ‘Judas Hands’, an “amateurish approximation of 70s soul, which turns into something else,” as Hutchings described it to me, sees all thirteen players on stage at once, having their James Brown moment.

They encore with the stomping ‘Everything Begins And Ends At Exactly The Right Time’, from *Come Across*, just the four core members, but the crowd are still yelling for more, so after several minutes an exhausted Jamie Hutchings comes back on stage alone, armed with an acoustic guitar and a glass of red wine, promising a song, “that’ll make you all want to go home”. It’s ‘Father’s Hands’, the unadorned ballad that sees Hutchings return to the direct, emotional singer-

songwriter mode of ‘Beautifully Tragic’; a song that laments his being “limited to being who I am”.

A quiet murmur of voices joins in with the melody across the floor; people clap to keep time. For a man who began Bluebottle Kiss with no notion of himself as either a singer – “I was shocking when we first started, people used to ask me to stop” – or a front person – “I was surprised to find myself doing it: I was never a performer” – Jamie Hutchings sure knows how to hold a crowd. What’s interesting – touching, even – is that it seems so effortless: there’s no forced banter and no temper tantrums. Jamie Hutchings is not a rock star, although he’d probably make a good one, and Bluebottle Kiss is still a band you’ll catch playing the Hopetoun Hotel (capacity 200) after thirteen years. They’re special – very special, the sound of sunlight on a Sydney afternoon, warm and elusive – but Bluebottle Kiss only ever do what they do best: play music. Nevertheless, Hutchings does have a sense of tonight’s significance in the unfolding, so far unending story of his band. “Thank you all for coming,” he says to the crowd. “It’s a long road. But there’s been some beautiful scenery.”

+

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disc. 4



1

ii
Obo (3:24)
Unreleased

Plinks, blips, hums, warbles, meeps, throbs, bangs, clunks and shuffles. improvised and otherwise, from opposing sides of merri creek.
© ii 2006

myspace.com/itunesdizzydonor.org



4

Clairaudience
Camber (3:39)
Unreleased

In 2007 on Feral Media.
© Clairaudience 2006



3

Because Of Ghosts
No Stars In Tokyo (6:07)
From *The Tomorrow We Were Promised Yesterday* (FM27) out October 2, 2006.

The band utilised the stifling humidity of a North Melbourne warehouse, the natural reverb of a Johnston Street garage, field recordings from Japan, and the warmth of friends, family and two-inch tape.
© Because Of Ghosts 2006

becauseofghosts.com



11

Barrage
Bygones (Demo) (3:08)
Unreleased

Barrage's song set is equal parts gas and fatal murmurs; provocative and doubtful at the same time. Cloying and gushing or distantly blunted, but always sacrificial with a sabotaging streak.
© Mark Gomes 2006

myspace.com/egarrab
barragemusic.com



13

Scissors For Sparrow
Castro (Edit) (2:27)
Unreleased

Through the strong belief that ideas are everywhere to be explored, and that music is exciting, Scissors for Sparrow songs are both playful and thoughtful; the product of distracted, reflective and erratic imaginings.
© Jon Tjhia 2006

dizzydonor.org



12

Comatone
Untitled 7 (M+N edit) (6:20)
Unreleased

Greg Seiler created Comatone in 1999. Comatone has released two albums on Feral Media, 2003's *One Into One Out* and 2005's *E-50*. His latest project is the album *Ghosts & Angels* (see track 8), a collaboration with Amanda Handel.
© Greg Seiler 2006

myspace.com/chainhalo



14

Faux Pas
Tema de Cristina (4:53)
From *Entropy Begins At Home*

Just one guy making kooky sample-tronica from Melbourne.
© Tim Shiel 2006

myspace.com/iamfauxpas
iamfauxpas.com



5

restream
christiantelevision (3:05)
From *loopsforstereogram* thru Lofly Recordings

loopsforstereogram is a lush and sentimental record not really of any era, with quiet bleepy bedroom guitar strums opening up into vast saturated spaces.
© Andrew James White 2005

lofly.com



6

Ill Bravados
Kirakira (4:09)
Unreleased

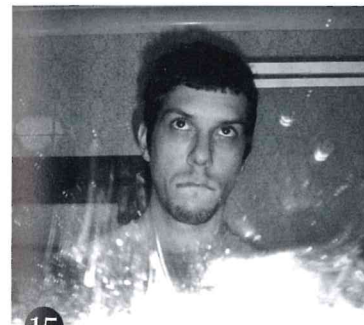
Ill Bravados use outdated software, four-track recorders & noisy tapes to make pop ditties that don't rock & roll as much as they lurch & lumber.
© Chris Hung 2006

myspace.com/illbravados

7

Underlapper
Little Tapioca (4:03)
Unreleased

"I think the best way to describe the music we are currently making is 'Post Op. Rock'".
© Underlapper 2006



15

Mieli
Jill Left Alone (5:19)
Unreleased

"You have to set your own limits and kind of restrict your interests just to get things done - it's easy to get caught within the millions of details". Mieli's debut album *Version*, described by inthemix.com.au as "shimmering minimal electronics with a deep dub pulse" was released last year on Feral Media.
© Ryan Gobbe 2006



16

The Artifishal Limb
Lose The Plot (3:23)
Unreleased

© Marc Eiden 2006
myspace.com/artifishallimb

TextileAudio
Of Hymn (3:45)
Unreleased

Between ambient electronica and classical music lies TextileAudio. Working with scores, field recordings, and operatic-pop composite vocals to weave rich melodic soundscapes and textures this music is unashamedly romantic.
© Eve Klein 2006

textileaudio.com



17

Amanda Handel + GL Seiler
iGuapo! (4:02)
From *Ghosts & Angels* (FM25)

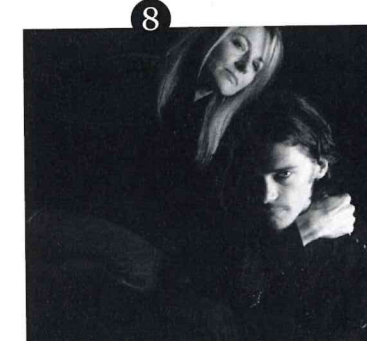
Ghosts and Angels is a breathtaking first-time musical collaboration between a classical composer and a highly-regarded electronic artist.
© Amanda Handel & GL Seiler 2006

myspace.com/amandahandelglseiler

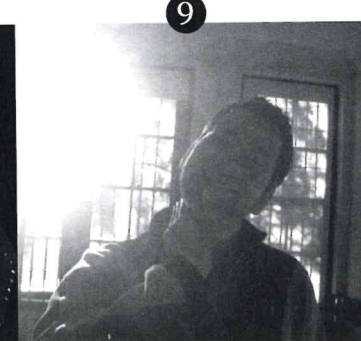
Alpen
Letting Go And Moving To The Light (M+N edit) (3:35)
Unreleased

Alpen's debut album *Overdub* was released last year on Feral Media. "From starry-eyed pop to bent beats and sublime atmospheres." 2SER
© Daniel Jumpertz 2006

myspace.com/aalpen



8



9

The Emergency
The Highway (2:47)
Unreleased

The Emergency's debut album *The Spectrum Deadly* was released last year on Feral Media
© The Emergency 2006

myspace.com/theemergency
the-emergency.net/



10



18

Seaworthy
Lost Highway (Live) (6:58)
Unreleased

Seaworthy formed in 2000 to explore melodic and experimental approaches to the construction (and unravelling) of minimalist sound scapes from looped guitar, warm drones, piano, electronics and field recordings.
© Seaworthy 2006

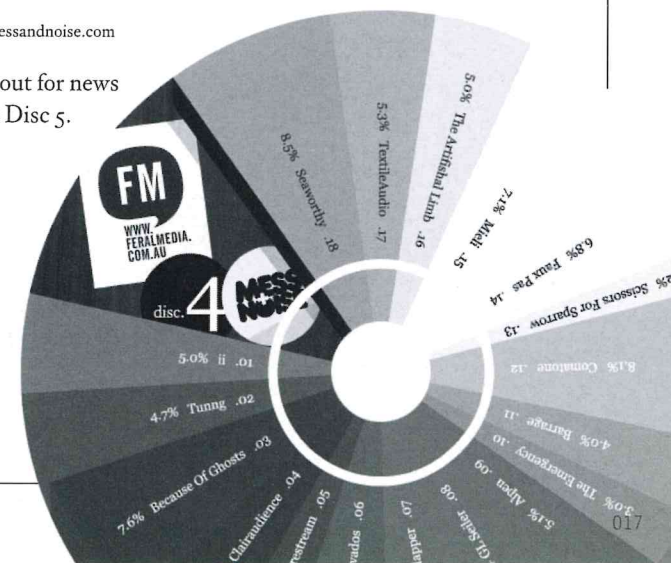
myspace.com/backgroundfrequencies

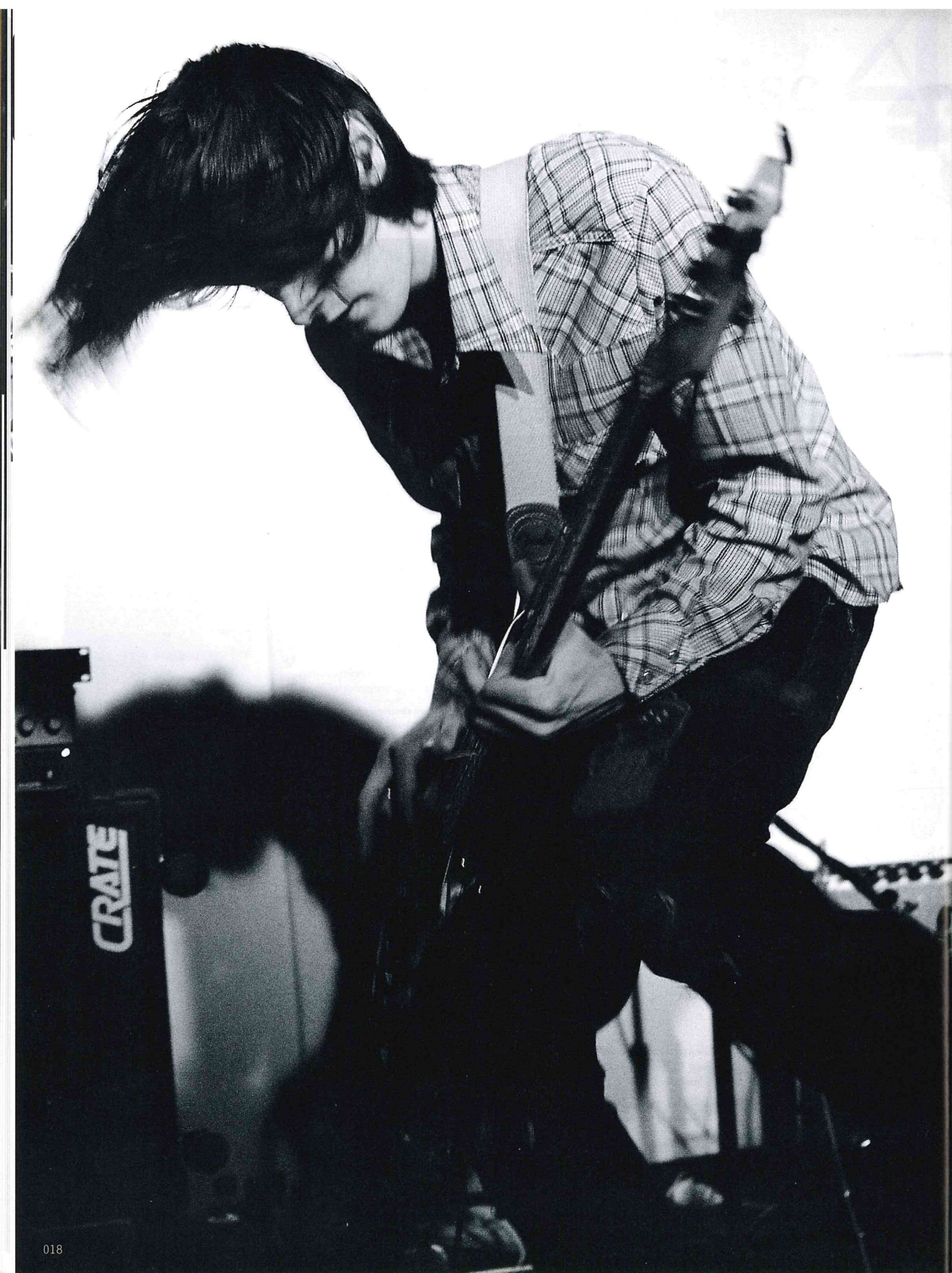
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www.messandnoise.com

Look out for news about Disc 5.





Hide and Seek

A conversation with Sianna Lee of Love Outside Andromeda about honesty in songwriting, men who cry and creative women

Story by Craig Mathieson
Photos by Zosia Fabijanska

Sianna Lee is fascinated by the way we mark our bodies – from the emotional scars few can see to the signage we wear in everyday life. Two years ago, when Love Outside Andromeda had just released their caustic, self-titled debut set, she arrived to be interviewed with a plastic letter ‘k’ affixed to her chest. She wasn’t sure why, but it made sense to her. Meeting in a deserted Richmond bar to discuss the Melbourne quartet’s new set, *Longing Was a Safe Place to Hide*, a piece of metallic wire, twisted into shape to form the word ‘joey’, is attached to her jacket. It’s an acknowledgment of the band’s drummer, Joseph Hammond, who has been her bandmate – alongside her teenage best friend, guitarist Jamie Slocombe, and her brother, bassist Jesse Lee – for six years and her partner for two. That distinction is important in regard to the sophomore release. Produced by Tony Cohen, it expands the group’s musical and lyrical palette. Sianna Lee is forthright about her own life and work, but her honesty never precludes self-deprecation or a good joke.

What did extensive touring over the last two years teach you?

The sleep deprivation is very good training for having children and it’s made me ready to play overseas. We’ve done the East Coast run a lot, which is good because it did take me a while to get comfortable on stage.

How did you know you’d become comfortable on stage?

The other members of the band told me. I can think about things more on stage now. I can relax. In the beginning I was so nervous that I couldn’t think about sound or tempo. I was

just there and trying to act like I was having a good time.

Are you working part-time still?

I work at Prahran Market at an organic fruit and vegetable stand – it’s my dream job! I’ve worked at the Vic Market and I’ve worked at Albert Park, but I’ve finally made it to Prahran.

Was there any discussion about what shape the new album should take?

We started rehearsing a year ago for this album and I think it was just a simple process of turning up with what I had written and saying to people, “What do you like?” It wasn’t an overly complicated procedure – I took in 15 or 16 songs and we recorded 11 for the album, with more as B-sides.

The tone on this is remarkably different in parts to the first.

I’m glad you can hear that. We were driving to Adelaide recently and we put on the first record and I listened to it from end to end. I had enough distance from it not to hear the recording as my voice, I wasn’t obsessing over faults and tearing it apart. The songs are well-structured, very strong form, but no real sense of space.

The emotional content is far more varied as well.

Lyrics have always driven the songs, especially on the first record, but it wasn’t like that on this album, which made it quite hard. The lyrics used to determine what I wanted to hear and that used to shape the arrangement.

And this time you put lyrics to already written tunes?

There are arrangements I didn’t write that I put lyrics to. I’ve done the writing on my own in the past because I don’t find collaboration very easy. But Jamie had a piece I liked – “Past Tense (But a Prayer Nonetheless)” – and I thought I could write to it. I wasn’t attached and precious about doing that.

Detachment is one of the emotions that’s on Longing... that was absent from your debut – the ability to be involved but distance from what’s happening in the songs?

That’s something I didn’t have as a person back then. I don’t think I’ll ever do an album like the first one again – well I hope I don’t. I’m glad I did it and I wouldn’t change it, but I was naïve about how blunt and honest I was being.

I think the correct phrase for that record is ferociously honest.

I wasn’t prepared for the social ramifications. It was a bit too much for some people to deal with.

Yet that record was your way of dealing with things.

I find that people who come to the shows who really like that album are kinda suppressed in some way. We get very blokey, masculine men who like our music and in the beginning that didn’t make sense. I thought they would find my songs repulsive, but it’s more about the fact that men have to suppress more than women. Men have that expectation of being strong and for some reason that notion connected with something in our songs.

Were you bailed up a lot after shows by people who wanted to communicate what your songs meant to them?



You've written really personal songs?

Yes, but they're still strangers. There's a perception of me that's not true, but I think that's part of the life for everyone in this game.

On "Enora" there's some wonderful little phrases that arrive very unexpectedly. The song has a very intimate feel, but then there's a reference to star systems – the language used through the album feels denser and allusive. For example, why is someone an "Imperial lover"?

"Enora" is a song I can't explain very easily. It's one of those songs that exist on many different levels – to discuss one part is to oversimplify it.

"Imperial lover" isn't a veiled Star Wars reference, is it?

No, definitely not.

There's wonderful imagery on "Measuring Tape" – "My teeth are clean and my ingratitude is borderline obscene".

Sometimes that method of doing snapshots works for me. I worry a lot about getting holes in my teeth.

Wasn't Freud big on teeth?

He was. He would think holes in your teeth are very bad. And showing gratitude is something I've put a bit of work into because I'm not naturally a very positive, grateful person.

Two years ago you were interested in writing songs while experiencing a solid, successful relationship – how did that all work out?

I'm still in a successful relationship. I went through a lot of fear about not being able to write because I was happy. I had to deal with that tragic artist bullshit. It doesn't make sense that you have to be tortured to make great art. On the first album I didn't give a fuck. I said exactly what I wanted to say and expressed my anger completely and without any consideration for what anyone else felt.

Did the person you broke up with while writing the first album ever respond to the songs?

I think they were too afraid to. Writing while in a relationship this time took some time to get used to, because I was so used to writing from a place of longing.

Listening to the new album that new relationship doesn't sound fixed and solid...

That's because I'm not fixed and solid! It's

worth saying that not every song is about me – "Hook In My Throat" comes from around the time of the first album, it's about *that* guy. I remember when we did one of our first album tours and a guy from the support band said, "I wouldn't like to be your ex-boyfriend!"

Your vocals, however, do sound freer and easier?

On the first album I spent something like 25 days doing vocals! I wasn't performing the whole time, I was freaking out and crying. I refer to it as a crisis of confidence. I remember listening back to "Tongue Like A Tether" and sobbing with relief that I'd gotten it right and done it exactly how I wanted to do it. I'd wake up and be panicking in the middle of the night and have a whole range of psychosomatic sore throats. This time the vocals took five days, which is good for a hideous perfectionist.

You told me two years ago that while it wasn't a reflection of religious interest, prayer interested you. Is that still the case?

I still have something, whatever it is.

You got a successful relationship, "something" and your dream job. If I was Dr. Phil I'd be very impressed.

I was quite into Dr. Phil during my breakdown period when he was still appearing on Oprah.

What piece of art means the most to you in the world right now?

Right now I'm trying to read and listen and see art made by women. I'm reading a biography of Yoko One and listening to Marianne Faithfull – *Before The Poison and Broken English*. I love "Why'd Ya Do It" – I want to cover it one day.

Maybe the moment when that song ["Why'd ya do it she said / Why'd you let that trash / Get a hold of your cock / Get stoned on my bash..."] could belong to you has gone?

It may well have. I went to the Picasso exhibition and now I want to find out more about Dora Maar. I loved her work and to see her influence upon him. Apparently he destroyed her. *The Bell Jar* is the thing most important to me recently. Sylvia Plath is fucking incredible. Virginia Woolf as well. They're obviously women who felt they weren't meant to be here and killed themselves, but what they contributed was unbelievably relevant and needed. And still relevant today.

+



LILYS

Everything Wrong Is Imaginary CD album
"Wistful, edgy pop" Pitchfork Media
Produced by Michael Musmanno (Outkast)

OKKERVIL RIVER

Overboard And Down exclusive
Australian / New Zealand tour EP

"Sheff delivers his vocals in a sort of ramshackle way, stumbling through cracks and phlegm as he strikes his words, singing it all with his familiar southern bent and a universal appeal"
Sadness Is In The Sky - Steve Phillips

SAILBOATS ARE WHITE

Turbo! CD album

"Like a drunker MOS with no drummer, Hamilton, ON's Sailboats Are White kick out the jams drum machine-style, knocking over every table in the room during a scramble for the bar" Exclaim

LTTH

C.W. STONEKING

Jeff Lang's song Slip Away was inspired by Melbourne blues act C.W. Stoneking. "I was watching his gig at the Old Bar and realised how authentic it was," says Lang. "It was like transporting you through a portal to 1925, back to Son House"

Touring in October with The Primitive Horn Orchestra

SUBAUDIBLE HUM

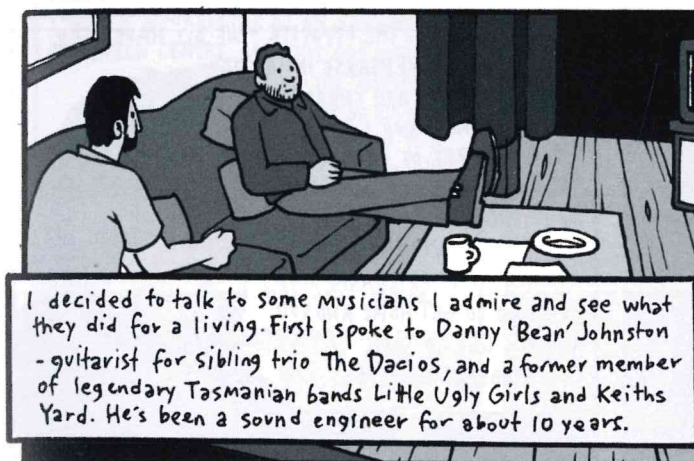
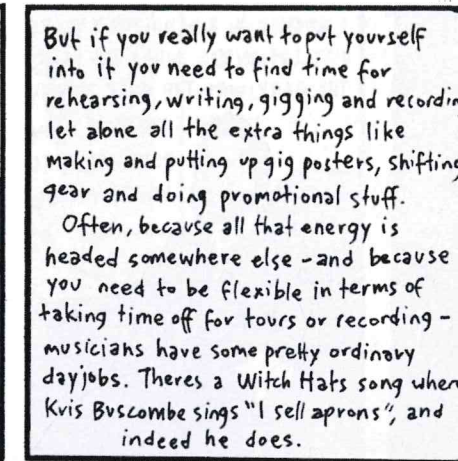
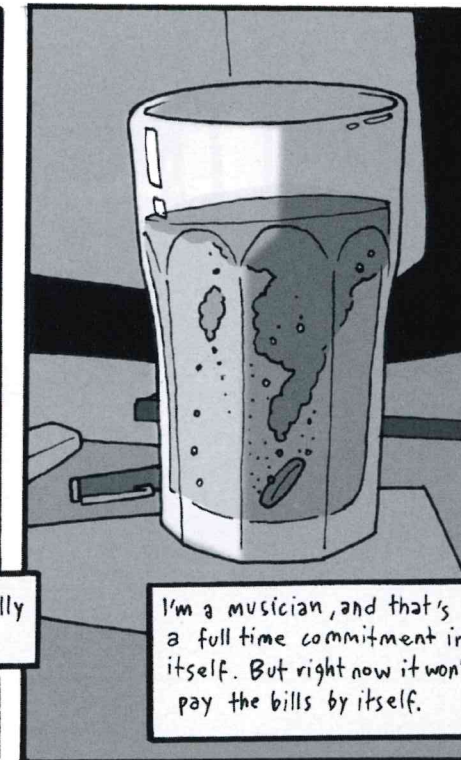
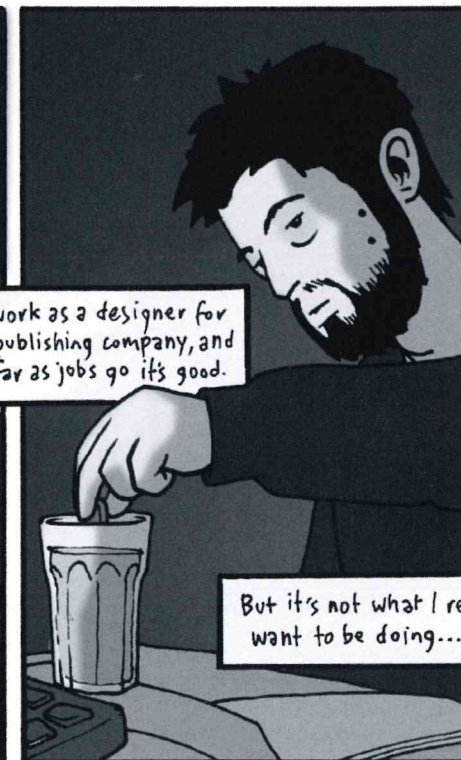
"A universe in lo-fi, All For The Caspian is a cluttered glory of guitars, errant strings, & plaintive poetry..."

I'm not kidding, it's that good" Beat's Single of the week
From the forthcoming album "In Time For Spring, On Came The Snow"
Touring October / November



THE DAY JOB AND THE DAMAGE DONE

BY TOBY MORRIS





THE THING I WAS REALLY WANTING TO KNOW WAS HOW THESE PEOPLE FOUND A BALANCE IN THEIR LIVES BETWEEN WORKING AND PLAYING MUSIC.



I WORKED IN A BANK FOR 7 YEARS. I LEFT THE BANK AND STARTED PLAYING - I GOT DISILLUSIONED... WHAT THE FUCK WAS I WORKING IN A BANK FOR? WHEN I WAS AT THE BANK WAS THE ONLY TIME IN MY LIFE THAT I ALWAYS HAD MONEY THOUGH - CONSTANT MONEY... BUT WHEN I BECAME A MUSICIAN AND WAS DOING PART TIME WORK... YOU'VE GOT LESS MONEY TO SPEND WHEN YOU NEED NEW GEAR AND ALL THAT SORTA STUFF.



YOU THINK 'OH GREAT YEAH NOW I'M NOT WORKING FULL TIME I CAN... AH NO I CAN'T GO OUT AND DO THIS AND DO THAT BECAUSE I'VE GOT NO FUCKIN' MONEY.'



DOES WORK GET IN THE WAY OF YOUR MUSIC?



IN SOME WAYS IT'S THE OPPOSITE - WE ALL HAVE WEEK PAYS OFF SO WE REHEARSE IN THE DAY WHEN THE ROOMS ARE CHEAPER... I DO RECORDING AND I GET ALL THE GEAR FREE OF CHARGE... THE ONLY THING WHICH CAN BE ANNOYING IS DOING A FRIDAY NIGHT GIG AND EVERYONE IS WHOOPIN' IT UP AFTERWARD AND I'VE HAD TO GET HOME AND YOU KNOW... GET TO SOME FIDDLERS FESTIVAL.



IT WOULD BE NICE TO BE ABLE TO WRITE ALL DAY EVERY DAY, THAT'D JUST BE A DREAM. BUT I CAN'T DO MY APPRENTICESHIP PART TIME - IT'S FULL TIME, SO IT MAKES YOU TREASURE THE SPARE MOMENTS YOU HAVE TO ACTUALLY GET YOUR SHIT TOGETHER AND WRITE.



PLAYING IN BANDS HAS IN THE PAST RETARDED POSSIBILITIES OF DOING WORK TOO - YOU'RE ALWAYS PRIORITISING MUSIC.

DOES WORK IMPACT ON YOUR MUSIC? DO THEY INFLUENCE EACH OTHER?



YEAH - ONE OF THE BITES SONGS 'FIRED' WAS ABOUT ME GETTING FIRED WHEN I WAS WORKING IN AN OFFICE AND I RECKON I MADE MORE MONEY FROM THAT SONG THAN I DID IN THE FIVE DAYS I WORKED THERE - SO YOU DO DRAW ON THOSE EXPERIENCES, WHICH IS WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO DO SOMETHING NOT AT ALL RELATED TO MUSIC SO YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO WRITE ABOUT OR TO INSPIRE YOU.



THE NAME OF THE BAND - HAND HELL - THAT CAME FROM KIRSTY'S HANDS ALWAYS BEING FUCKED UP FROM WORKING WITH MACHINES... CUTTING BITS OF FINGERS OFF...



BURNING BLISTERS OVER BLISTERS... CUTTING YOURSELF... DRILLING YOUR HANDS...



DO YOU LET YOUR WORK WORLD AND YOUR MUSICIAN WORLD COMBINE?



NA, YOU GO AND DO YOUR JOB - IT'S A JOB. A LOT OF THE TIME I DO ALL AGES GIGS AND ITS RARE THERE'S SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS ME. IT'S ALL GENERIC SHIT AND I'M NOT INTO IT - BOYS AND FUCKIN' HALF ARSED METAL SHIT. THE ONLY TIME IT'S REALLY HAPPENED IS WHEN I FIRST MET THE STABS - I HADN'T HEARD THEM AND I MIXED THEM AT A UNI GIG. SHOWED UP WITH THEIR BONGS AND CARTONS OF BEER - FUCKIN' UNBELIEVABLE! THEY PLAYED AND I WAS JUST 'OH FUCK, THAT'S GENIUS! YOU'RE THE FIRST BAND I'VE MIXED AT THESE THINGS EVER THAT I'VE ACTUALLY ENJOYED.'



I WAS A BOOKKEEPER AT AN AMPHIBIAN RESEARCH CENTRE, AND THIS GUY WHO WAS LIKE THE AMPHIBIAN EXPERT OF AUSTRALIA CAME ALONG TO A COUPLE OF MY GIGS. HE WANTED TO BOND WITH ALL HIS EMPLOYEES - AND IT WAS JUST BAD.



IF I WANTED TO I COULD GO OUT AND DO OTHER WORK FOR BANDS I LIKE - I'VE DONE A FEW MIXING JOBS IN PUBS BUT I CAN'T BE ARSED WITH THAT ANYMORE. TOO OLD, TOO TIRED FOR THAT.



THE GOLDEN RULE I'VE LEARNED IS KEEP IT ALL SEPARATE. COMPARTMENTALISE EVERYTHING. DON'T PLAY MUSIC IN YOUR BEDROOM, DON'T SLEEP NEAR YOUR INSTRUMENTS, DON'T WORK WHERE YOU PLAY MUSIC AND DON'T WORK WITH ANYONE WHO PLAYS MUSIC.



RIGHT NOW, HUNGOVER AT WORK, THE THING I'M THINKING ABOUT IS SOMETHING KIRSTY WAS SAYING ABOUT TAKING A POSITIVE FROM WORKING.



MUSIC IS QUITE SIMILAR TO GAMBLING IN SOME WAYS. YOU'RE INVESTING IN A POTENTIALITY OR POSSIBILITY AS FAR AS REWARD GOES... AS FAR AS OUTPUTTING MONEY OR TIME YOU NEVER KNOW EXACTLY THE QUANTITIES OF EACH - HOW LONG WILL THE ALBUM TAKE, HOW MUCH MONEY WILL YOU SPEND? YOU KNOW YOU'LL ALWAYS LOVE IT - IT WILL ALWAYS BE REWARDING IN THAT WAY BUT THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER WAYS OF GETTING HAPPINESS WHICH ARE A LOT MORE LONG LASTING...



THE KIND OF REWARD YOU GET FROM LOVING YOUR MUSIC - BECAUSE IT'S TO DO WITH YOUR CREATIVITY AND YOUR PERSONALITY AND YOUR INSECURITIES AND SECURITIES - IT'S MUCH HEALTHIER TO GET A CONSTANT, MORE STABLE REWARD FROM SOMETHING LIKE METAL WORKING. YOU DON'T GET THE HIGHS AND LOWS, IT'S JUST A CONSTANT NOURISHMENT WHEREAS MUSIC CAN BE REALLY FANTASTIC, THEN NEXT GIG IS THREE WEEKS AWAY AND IT'S 'AH, WHERE DO I GET MY FIX!'



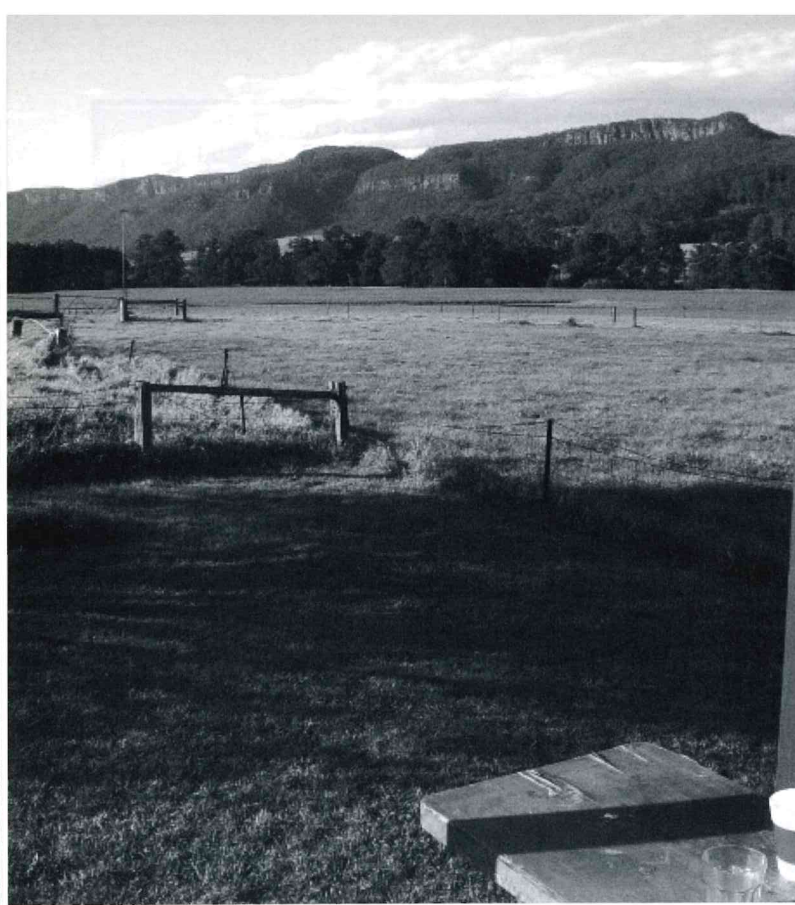
WITH MUSIC YOU'RE TOTALLY EMOTIONALLY INVESTED IN IT SO IF YOUR BAND BREAKS UP OR YOUR RECORD DOESN'T SELL OR YOU GET A CRAP REVIEW IT'S GONNA HAVE MORE OF AN EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON YOU THAN IF YOU HAVE A CRAP DAY AT WORK. IT'S WHAT MATTERS TO YOU - WORK IS 'AH, HAD A CRAP DAY, TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER...'



Yeah... tomorrow will be better...

THANKS: SONYA NAGELS FOR REFERENCE PHOTOS!

TOBY MORRIS



Mountains in the Sky

Producer and musician Tony Dupé defines the many spaces he inhabits

Story by Eliza Sarlos
Photos by Tony Dupé

Tony Dupé, for those who don't know, is one of those enigmatic figures of Australian music that is comfortably positioned outside of everything. A producer, musician, and label man by both passion and trade, he's the kind of person who is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. But that lack of visibility doesn't reflect his skill or involvement.

So think of this as an attempt to address that lack of visibility – a user's guide to Tony Dupé.

If you've got a far-reaching memory you might recall his band Glovebox. One of the best-kept secrets of Sydney circa the late nineties, they released a couple of recordings on Half A Cow and ID Records, the "indie" subsidiary

of PolyGram at the time. Things came to an end organically, people went off and did their own things, and Tony's own thing led him south, firstly to Gerroa where he tinkered in the recording of other people's records and began defining his solo music aesthetic, then down to Kiama and up a mountain.

"It was just a little one room that I had everything in, but it was all windows so it was really light. It was very beautiful. I think a lot of that time influenced that first record [as Saddleback, 2004's *Everything's A Love Letter*]. It was reflective – staring at the ocean all day – and just trying to feel better about everything. The way you do. It's like, 'How can I feel better about the world, feel better about my place in it?'"

So making the record made you feel better about the world?

"Living somewhere beautiful did. Yes. Actually, I think making music generally speaking makes you feel better about everything."

As Saddleback (Tony's musical moniker) he released *Everything's A Love Letter* on the Preservation label in 2004. On Saddleback (the mountain, in Kiama on the NSW South Coast, where he made the record) he moved into a house/makeshift studio that would allow musicians an idyllic escape from city life and city thinking and the chance to make music.

This is also the guy responsible for the criminally overlooked Heavy label, which is home to Via Tania, The Woods Themselves, Kid Cornered, Night Radio, Joseph Leonard (with or without the Family Fuse) plus plenty more. These records are worth your ears, guaranteed, and are criminally comfortable inhabiting an almost negligible space in the Australian music scene. Every time I hear a lesser contemporary championed by mainstream media it hurts my head, but being under-rated is part of the plight of anyone hoping for posthumous cult status. Tony calls it "the Van Gogh syndrome". He's joking, by the way, and finds solace in the concept as it means at least someday someone might hear, and appreciate, the acts he cherishes.

Strongly linked to the label is the environment Tony surrounds himself in. I was lucky enough to be invited for a weekend adventure to his new studio/residence in Kangaroo Valley, and given a thorough tour of both studio and coffee pot.

Two hours' drive from Sydney, Kangaroo Valley is one of only seven entirely enclosed valleys in the world. Apart from that being something of a geographical marvel, it also means the journey there is quite spectacular. Winding up and down tight, mostly makeshift roads to get to Tony's house means that every swerve of the car and chug of the engine intensifies the distance you feel from your urban residence. It's the one time where I've

really felt that amount of distance has been necessary for an interview, so that you can feel the seclusion that Tony embraces as a part of his escape from city living. Upon arrival there's a quick tour and I swiftly fall into rural life. The envy starts shortly afterwards.

"I was sitting here and I heard this sound. I couldn't work out what it was and then I realized it was a leaf falling off a tree over there," notes Dupe, pointing far off into the distance. No, really.

Imagine a place where you *can* hear a leaf falling from a tree. A place where artists come and sip tea, think mountains and make music. Imagine this being your life. Before the move to Kangaroo Valley, Tony Dupé offered his Saddleback home to Paddy Mann throughout the recording of last year's Grand Salvo record, *The Temporal Wheel*. He twiddled knobs and laid tracks to both of Holly Throsby's records. He's offered a willingness to play with sounds that saw Bluebottle Kiss' Jamie Hutchings, Tania Bowers (via Tania) and The Sea and Cake's Archer Prewitt all head down to do solo stuff with the man. And he also found the space where Jack Ladder sounded more like Jack Ladder than Bill Callahan. His influence and involvement in these recordings, as well as plenty of others, is both varied and vital, but in each case he's begun by facilitating a space to see the individual's music evolve. The move to Kangaroo Valley, where there's more space, is

only going to encourage this.

Do you think this space plays a role in what you do when it comes to producing other people's records?

"I think so, for the way I work its perfect really, and for what I respond to or try and bring out, which is the human quality and distinctive character of each person. I think that's really important to making a record sound different to anybody else's, it can't be ignored. [It's] because you're in such an environment it strips away a lot of bullshit and you relate on a very human level, and it does feel like you do get to know people, and that really helps the way that I work because that's what I'm trying to bring out and understand and communicate."

Looking out across the valley, it seems that all there is to contend with are mountains, herding cattle, and a degree of what Tony has coined "bogus porch philosophy". His philosophies seem to be constantly shifting, but as we're sitting there watching the light sets the idea that the valley creates a space where colours reflect differently according to the sun's placement, that they move in and out and alter one's perception of the landscape. He insists it's bogus, but after experiencing dusk I can attest to the theory.

It's one I think also relates to his own recordings, where the subtlety of sounds



moving in and out reflect different aspects of one's listening, or can make a listener a little self-conscious in the way their listening shifts. It's possible that's one way space relates to the music he makes, that preoccupation with creating something that's endlessly interpretable but not necessarily so. That's my bogus porch philosophy.

But when it comes to Tony's own reflections on his records (yes, there's a follow up to *Everything's A Love Letter* seconds away from being finished), that relative seclusion plays a different role.

"I think because [time] is constantly marked, when I'm here there is no marking at all of the day, really. It's light and it's dark. And I think that makes it a good way to work too, where you're waking up and then you start work when you feel good and you finish when you feel tired and it doesn't have to sit within other concerns it just is totally based on how you feel and what you're doing," he says.

So it seems Tony's perfected the art of life planning – to be able to work when you want to and to be able to make music that doesn't sit "within other concerns" is an amazing luxury. Apart from real world concerns and constraints like money, it seems the Dupé world is pretty sweet.

After our verandah chat over long blacks and pine nut brioche, Tony took me into his

studio and played me some of his forthcoming record. Here's a hint: it's killer. Darker than the last one, more laboured over in terms of the perfect construction of individual moments, and more detailed in terms of a communication of feeling. On first listen it seems like this last point, this effort in communication, has gone up in the creative hierarchy ranks. It's a current obsession, for me at least, but we'll return to that a little later.

While Tony's constant self-doubt and humility will have you believe he doesn't know where he's going, his life surroundings and creations inform any astute viewer otherwise. The studio is nicely decked out with a mix of analog and digital gear, and awesome décor including a gorgeous chaise lounge I sleep on later that night. Tony informs me that that's another benefit of living in the country: every op shop adventure is incredibly fruitful.

It's within these confines that Tony creates. Analog. Digital. Everything. There is so much available now in terms of what a producer can use to create that the blend of seemingly endless time and endless musical possibilities can be a bit daunting. Since the last Saddleback record, Tony's refined his use of ProTools, which means this is even more pronounced now.

"I'm sure there's so much I don't know but,

apart from technical skills, I feel like mainly I've learnt there isn't too much to learn in a way, it's only developing your own playing – the less rules there are the better I think. I find that everything is really heavily related in music so that things that maybe shouldn't work (do) work frequently. You can just move things around and they'll work in different ways, things that are non-musical will work well in there, too, because they're textural. So just trying things, really, is the best way to work, because you're not ascribing to any theories really, you're just trying things and going 'Is that good?' And if you've got time you can do that, really, ad nauseum."

There is, however, a qualification to the credence of not ascribing to any theories.

"I try and restrict my palette for my own music, and probably for most other people, too. So I'm generally using acoustic instruments recorded in the room and then played with after that, but that's not always the case. I don't want to say one way in particular – I think it's good to use lots of things to get what you want to say across," he explains.

But I don't even think that's limiting you to one way, there are so many different things you can do when you record.

"It's true. And everything else is just making decisions based on how you hear it and what

"I tried to learn guitar and I was pointed out as the person that was making the horrible noise," he says with a surprisingly warm nostalgia.

you like. So endless possibilities doesn't really matter in a way because you're just following your nose towards what you think sounds good and trying to keep just moving forward."

For you is it a case of knowing where you want to go?

"Not really, I like the adventure I think, to move. I'm not much of a head musician, I just like to respond to what we have, and respond and play, and then respond to how that sounds and just keep sending everything through my ears rather than just having some grand plan of what something should be. Because I feel like maybe that's relying more on things that I've heard before, or some theory, whereas I like that kind of native response."

Sounds kind of improvisational. Maybe controlled improvisation?

"A lot of the playing, I guess all the playing that I do on stuff, is just improvisation and then just listen to what works and keep that."

So the process of elimination is what Tony Dupé's work as producer and artist in his own right is all about – an elimination to allow for a situation where the self can flourish. I know that sounds ridiculous, because one is always his or her self, but I feel that every day, when it's consistently crowded with obligation, with city busyness, with general life needs/wants/desires, that individuality gets allotted to external stuff before there's a chance to focus on communicating the internal. Ewww. That sounds totally Zen, or at least neo-hippie, but it's not meant to be.

Music, if it's role is to be anything beyond wallpaper or filler of time, should be there to communicate some innate part of ones' self to the listener. It's not about harbouring resentment to the outer world, but combining the impact this world has on the self and finding the language to articulate that interaction, that experience. That, for me, is the ultimate function of any art – why bother creating something so self-indulgent

if it ignores that element of self? So whether it's the painter with brush, the graff artist with Posca pen, or the musician armed with acoustic instruments and digital production skills, it's important to develop the language that is the most appropriate vocabulary to express that part of ones' self.

Importantly, I think most often this is something you *can't* learn. Tony, through experience, agrees. "I tried to learn guitar and I was pointed out as the person that was making the horrible noise," he says with a surprisingly warm nostalgia. "Quite often [an education in any school of creation] just kills the very thing that people have that makes them want to make art."

"Just having time to play a lot means you start using the studio as a tool. I figure it's a bit like a language, and you get a little bit better the more you use it, so you can articulate a little bit better, maybe, what you feel."

And how do you, I guess, learn – or develop – that language that's specific to your music?

"It also ties in with the idea of having a palette too, because that's part of your vocab and that's part of why your language sounds different. Most of my sounds are the actual sounds of an instrument, or the actual sound of a room with an instrument in it, rather than something that's plugged straight in. There's enough room for that sound to be made and not be shut down, or closed in ... You can make a lot of noise in the country and there's no noise from outside coming in so you can get the full scope of the room in that picture, maybe. That's probably similar to a studio, I guess, it's just the rooms are less nuanced in a studio. They're less likely to be a wooden room with a high ceiling, or whatever. They're more likely to be concrete."

I'm lucky to have caught Tony at a time in his life where there's relative upheaval: a new space, new work, and a forthcoming new record. It means that our time together is spent mostly talking about this kind of stuff – and the Beach Boys – while his multitudinous

existence is backgrounded for a little. Rest assured he's sharing the love, having found a bunch of musical contemporaries to create and reflect upon music communally.

"I do feel like we're all pretty alone so if we get together, it's pretty hard – you're not out there for pretty long when your record's out there so if they're associated and there is that stamp of approval then you're always being out there in a way, and people will maybe pick up on one thing and then hear another thing, and it's nice to feel like you're not so alone, that there is some association with some other people."

Tony's talking about his label, Heavy. Always a part-time thing in Tony's world it's there more as a photo album of the work he's been involved in and consequently fallen in love with more than a commercial venture. Tony provides a home for these records that's part refuge, part mantelpiece to display his paternal pride.

"I think it's great company and that's always welcome. I hope that it's kind of honest, that it's an honest expression and timeless and personal enough for [a listener] to feel some association with it, and therefore treasure it for a period of time and have your own kind of relationship with it."

You can tell Tony does this label thing because he has genuine amounts of love for the artists on the label, and the community that they spawn. I've been to nights with Heavy bands playing and the passion they have for each other's music is only rivaled by that they hold towards their own. It's a rare show where not every single constituent of the crew is in attendance, either helping out on stage, in the art department or part of the moral support massive. It sounds remarkably like one of those awful cliques, one that's both exclusionary and insular. It's not. It's just a group of people who get together regularly to make music and share ideas. Open to anyone who is generally obsessed by music. A unifying force? Maybe.

Here's your opportunity for cynicism. What's the point? Why is that existence of an inward facing community something to marvel at? I believe that if we're so obsessed with people making art, or at least producing culture (I'm assuming you are for even picking up this magazine) there's got to be a reason. In that right to be endlessly selfish, it's possible to find a way that it contributes to some sense of a common good.

"I think it's healthy to understand yourself and feel like you are living your life in a way, being able to express your ideas and that your

ideas and your feeling and your thoughts are valid. It's empowering to have that opportunity. It's just a depressing time in the world, I think, so that whole thing makes me think – perhaps it's a time when cultural things seem a little bit indulgent in a way," Tony says dejectedly, and I'm sure it's a concern for countless artists who spend their hours idly twiddling knobs or strumming chords.

"It's also a time when they're more important too. I mean, God, how bad is the news? But you know, buying into it is difficult because it's so difficult to effect change, and disappearing to here," he pauses, looking around into a vast expanse of valley, "is part of it too. I can't deal with the world, it's eating itself, so I am going to focus on what I believe is worthwhile or beautiful or, you know, important in a way."

If I were to write that out the way Tony said it, so you'd read it in real time, there'd be infinity squared spaces, so stilted and stumbling were his words as he tried to rationalize for himself why he does what he does.

Tony refers back to an anthology of diaries he'd borrowed from the local library only days earlier, which was sitting on the fireplace when I first arrived. It appealed to me because it was the first of its kind where I'd seen the diary entries of both the known and unknown throughout disparate periods of history placed alongside each other according to the day of the year, almost investigating the cyclical nature of the world through comparison. Yes, it was kind of scary. And yes, it'd make good fodder for a Wong Kar-Wai film.

"That's the whole interesting thing about these diaries, that whole cyclic nature. It's like 'Oh my God, it's 1935 again ...' The world's starting to draw lines in the sand very fast, and it's going in a way where it's just going to play over and over."

What role do you think culture plays in that?

"I think hopefully it should foster a sense of kindred and a sense of community, and maybe a focus on things that are outside of territory and religion. Maybe it is the universal language."

And realising alternatives through that language?

"There has to be a greater meaning to life than what is put forward by business and media. Increasingly the corporate world and the material world are enforcing a kind of framework for what life should be about."

+



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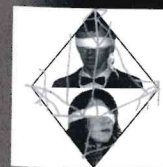
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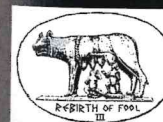
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Toxic Lipstick are 2 14 yr old hotties dropping the bass and breaking hearts in sunny Brisbane, Australia. When they're not smoking batteries behind the local bikerax they're changing lives with self-proclaimed hits such as 'peakin.....with control' and 'put it in'. With shining eyes and glossy coats these teen skanks aren't afraid to throw lips to the shit that really matters- ponies, boys, puberty, shafting acid and hosting exclusive popcorn sleepovers. A triple combo of dope beats, dope rhymes and dope rax with xtra fries, Toxic Lipstick are Australia's most bitchin whorecore duo eva.

www.dualplover.com

The Young Need Discipline

Perth's Eleventh He Reaches London:
too soft for the hardcore crowd, too hard
for the indie kids

Story by Matt Giles

Photos by Pete Parsons (group shot) and Inga

It's noon and I'm at my kitchen bench when the phone rings. Calling is Ian Lenton, singer/guitarist for Perth five-piece Eleventh He Reaches London.

"Hey, man, we'll be about 20 minutes," he says. Lenton and drummer Mark Donaldson are supposed to be at my house by now. "We're just at the bottle shop. You want us to get you anything?"

The unseasonable Perth sun outside and the prospect of talking for a couple of hours make me say yes. "A Tooheys New?" I reply.

"What? Western Bitter?"

Western Bitter is a particularly cheap, gross WA brew. He's fucking with me.

"Tooheys New," I repeat. "Tooheys. New."

"Western Bitter? How many longnecks?"

"Just get here."

"Okay, man. Western Bitter."

Twenty minutes later, Lenton arrives with Donaldson and some longnecks for them, two New stubbies for me, two burgers for himself and a gigantic smile on his face. It reminds me of one of the more memorable – and decipherable – lines on 'What Would Don Juan Say?' the middle cut on Eleventh He Reaches London's debut, seven-track LP, *The Good Fight for Harmony*.

Here's a tale about a boy / Who's six foot four and far from a man

Of all the interpretations available to the listener, the one most apt while speaking to Lenton and Donaldson is that, despite their age, they still act like boys. Sometimes these 24-year-olds exhibit the conviction and articulation of men, but, more strikingly, and just as often, they revert to the irreverence of teenagers.

"Scotch College was fucking hard," notes Lenton, who having dispatched his burgers is speaking of his and Donaldson's high school over my kitchen table. "You were either a sports hero, or an intellect, or you just coasted

through. And it's safe to say we just coasted through."

Seated beside him, Donaldson agrees. "We just went against everything by a) not studying ever, and b) instead of playing soccer we'd go poke turtles with sticks," he says.

"And watch dragonflies have sex," Lenton gleefully adds. "Remember that? Ever seen dragonflies having sex? You've gotta see it. They move in dragonfly motion."

"It's all fucking horizontal," Donaldson says, and the pair crack up.

The way they're laughing, it's like they're on the oval, 50 metres away from the sports heroes, seeing insect coitus for the first time. One constant throughout our discussion is that whatever we're talking about, they can always instinctively make each other laugh.

When the conversation moves to their music, the dialogue isn't always as free flowing. They don't exactly clam up but their faces become serious, they cross their arms and they stare

at the table. The words don't come as easily and will often divert to a funny story. They're like the boyfriend who can't talk about his feelings, has to crack a joke when the subject gets heavy. But once the laughter dies down and the hand gestures simulating insect procreation are done with, austerity creeps back in. The dragonfly anecdote, for example, emerges from an explanation of the lines in 'Say You See Why So' that goes:

Private school boys / We never gave a shit about anyone else

"I think it was important to have that lyric in there because otherwise on some level it would've seemed like we were trying to hide it," Donaldson explains. "It's just about being honest. Yeah, we went to private schools. We don't want to be in a band and pretending we never went to Scotch College."

That mix of personal bemusement and self-incrimination is just another part of the complex, self-aware muddle that is Eleventh He Reach London. They're a confessional metal/hardcore hybrid and if that sounds

Byzantine, you should actually meet them.

Two weeks earlier we're at Fibber McGees in Leederville, and Lenton and Donaldson are telling me their history. It's here that I'm introduced to their chemistry, a mixture of eye-to-eye agreement on music and an easy insistence on making fun of each other. Discussions of their early place in Perth's hardcore scene, for example, become recollections of inter-band soccer competitions.

"There were huge tournaments, especially outside HQ," Donaldson says.

"Remember that time I scored three goals?" Lenton says.

"Yes, that was quite amazing," Donaldson concedes.

"Then you tackled me down the woodchip bank," Lenton adds.

"Yeah, why did I do that?" Donaldson wonders.

"I dunno, jealous?" suggests Lenton

"Didn't you have your shirt off?" asks Donaldson, delivering the final riposte.

When Eleventh – whose other members are bassist Craig McElhenny and guitarists Jeremy Martin and Jayden Worts – made their big splash on Perth's small scene, they introduced a lot of people to a kind of music they'd perhaps heard of but never witnessed up close. It was at the launch for the Sabretooth Tigers' *Never Give Up* EP in early 2004. Five guys stood with their backs to an audience more used to the dancey noise of Snowman or the pure pop of the Bank Holidays, and slowly they built up a curious post-rock intro into a tempest of scorched triple guitar, belted double kick drum and a snarled, screamed and bellowed voice.

At the time the histrionics and multitudinous lyrics (an example: *Cut it out, cut it out / Creating fictitious fantasies deemed as the right of passage by our father figures / Who bought too highly into reflections of the young adult*) were so overwhelmingly dramatic that they



verged on the comical. But this show was the beginning of a kind of gigging campaign in the non-hardcore music scene that would eventually win Eleventh a place in the hearts of Perth's local music mainstream.

"People started to see our music as the whole thing rather than the parts – it wasn't just, 'That riff's sick'," Lenton recalls. "They started looking at the landscape of the whole song which was kind of what we wanted, hence our songs being so long. We don't want you to listen to a 10-minute song and appreciate two riffs out of it. Kids in the 'independent' scene were seeing that more because they had no footnotes or relationship to the kind of music we listen to.

"That made us feel like we were wanted somewhere else because someone had seen us, and paid attention to us," he says, "who wasn't involved in [the hardcore] scene."

That was a milieu in which Eleventh, for all their emotional bluster, could not thrive. The band formed in high school playing a version of metalcore inspired by Vision of Disorder and Zao ("Jayden got us into them because he was a massive God child and tricked us into liking God music," Lenton says) that developed over years of songwriting in private and eventually yielded four songs the band was happy with. Not seeing any likeminded

guys are sick where did you come from it's like Eighteen Visions. He was the only person who booked us for the first 20 shows."

But the reason behind their long period of rehearsal – their skepticism about fitting into the Perth music scene – turned out to be accurate. They gigged for almost two years without gaining their own following.

"At first [people] saw us out of fascination because we were a little bit different from everyone else," Lenton says. "But then you could kind of tell that after a while we weren't what they wanted to hear."

Donaldson is quick to put the kibosh on the perception that they moved on to indie audiences after conquering hardcore. "Oh no, let me tell you something," he says. "We were like the pussies of the hardcore scene, but the opposite of pussies in the indie scene. To me [playing hardcore gigs] was more about getting drunk in a carpark and playing soccer outside the venues than the music. They were welcoming on a friendship level – we made some awesome, awesome friends, and still love seeing those guys – but we just didn't belong there, we were too different. Which is totally fair. The songs were too melodic and ..."

"Long," interjects Lenton. "Our songs were

"One thing that shits me when I read lyrics is lyricists painting themselves as the complete victim ... Nothing shits me more than that because that is just unrealistic. You may as well be singing about galactic ships."

bands in Perth they were loathe to play live, but they eventually made their performance debut supporting Melbourne hardcore band Identity Theft, a position gained on the strength of an early track on a local punk compilation.

"Dion [Waterman, from now-defunct Perth punk band Boredumb] heard us on the compilation and rang me up," Lenton says, putting on a manic voice. "Oh my God you

too long, these kids had grown up on three-minute-or-less songs. And the problem for us was that we thought that scene was the most relevant to us, so that was the only place we could play. We were kind of hoping the audience would be a bit more open-minded than they were. Not to say that hardcore kids weren't open-minded, they just went to hardcore shows to see hardcore bands. We couldn't provide that."

The audiences that opened up to Eleventh after the Sabretooth Tigers show and, following that, Snowman's *Zombies on the Airwaves of Paris* launch, greeted the band with a mixture of love and hate, a far cry from the ambivalence of the punks. Those that hated them found it difficult to explore music outside of chorus-verse-chorus structures and backing harmonies, but those that loved found in Eleventh a monolithic approach to song structure that challenged Perth's normally staid, traditional music taste.

The Good Fight for Harmony is ostensibly the thing one would expect from a band operating inside the insular realm of, apologies in advance, emo. It features songs about Lenton's broken relationships, his angst and despair. But the self-loathing is not a symptom of unchecked depression. Back at my house, the air smelling of burgers and beer, he says that this is the result of honesty and a critical eye.

"One thing that shits me when I read lyrics is lyricists painting themselves as the complete victim," Lenton says. "That circumstances were completely unfair, blah blah blah. They did everything right. Nothing shits me more than that because that is just unrealistic. You may as well be singing about galactic ships."

This belief is reflected in well-observed, self-reflexive lines like, *Go on, blame her / Is that all you had to argue / Her failure to see you as that fuckwit we all know*. This is the captivating part of Eleventh – the lyrical gymnastics of the songs. 'What Would Don Juan Say?' opens with an apology for Lenton's psychological bloodletting, which is quickly followed by a chastisement for the apology: *Oh shit, misdirection on a tangent, played out, I know*.

On the epic closing number, 'Long Grows the List of the Live and Dead Pretenders', after several lines of referring to a 'he', he suddenly switches to 'I', afterwards singing, *Did I drop the third person act to show how real I can be? I've never been real in my life*.

But the true potency of the lyrics lay in their ability to match the scale of the music. Eleventh songs don't follow the hypnotic riff repetition that comparable acts like Isis and Neurosis use so well. Instead, each song contains several disparate, seldom recycled movements, lasting sometimes a minute, sometimes several. Even without the theme-variation-return-to-theme formula, the songs maintain a melodic and rhythmic logic whose climaxes are all the more orgasmic for their unpredictability. The lyrics ramble in kind, resulting in mountainous volumes of words resembling Conor Oberst's essays. The best

of both worlds is had – metal given shape by keenly articulated confession and boyish brooding given balls by shred.

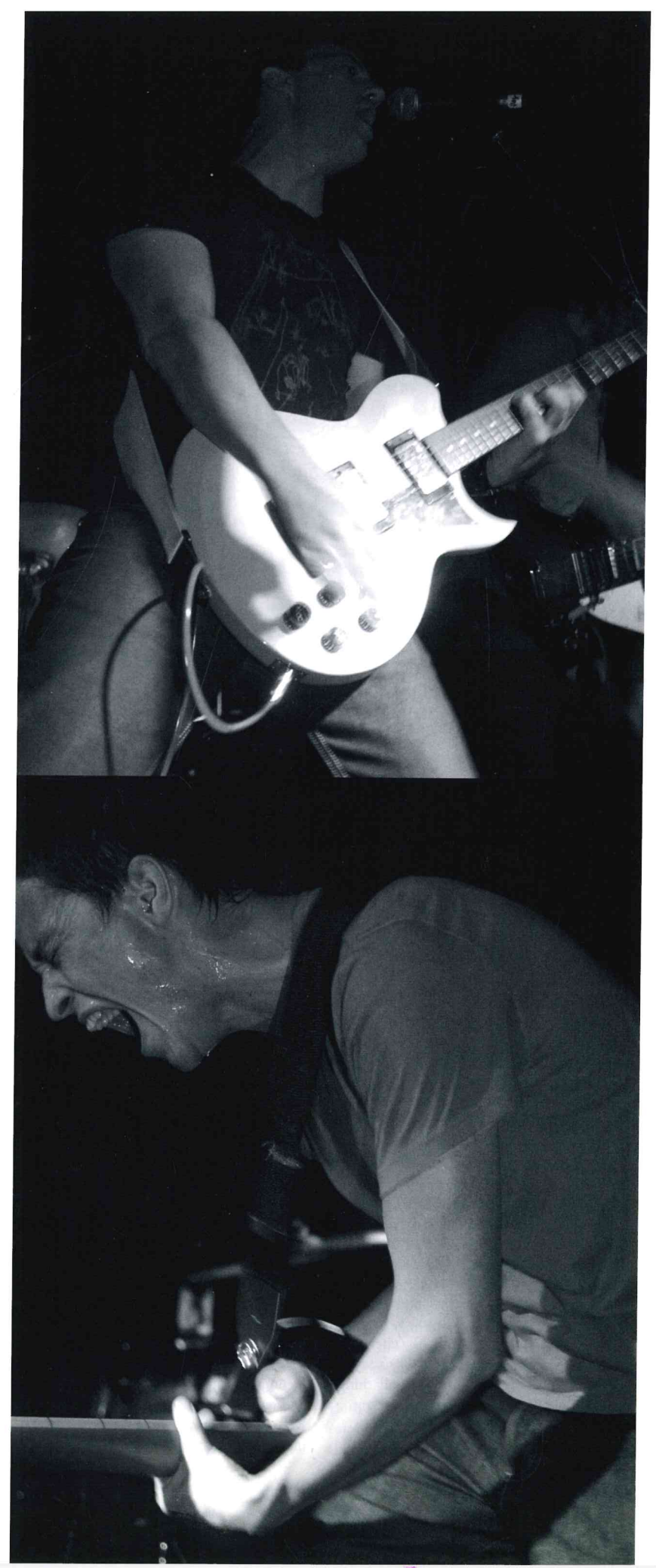
But it's not all sadsacks and broken hearts. The songs contain an intoxicating obsession with masculinity and place that vaults the album into the mythic – 'Long Grows the List...' especially. Here, Lenton's sense of family obligation is turned up to 11 as he recites his uncle's dying wishes, to be buried within earshot of the Fremantle town bells and to be dug up, *If they sing stockade songs along the dock*. In a highlight of the live show he screams, face torn in anguish, *I'll dig you up myself*.

Surprisingly, this vivid passage is one of the times some members of the band voiced an objection to Lenton's lyrics. "[The argument was] that it was too specific," Donaldson says, "and people who don't come from Fremantle, which is 99.999% of the world, might read the lyrics of the song then come to the end and say, 'This doesn't mean shit to me'."

"I can completely understand why that could've been a stupid decision, but I don't regret it," Lenton notes. "Writing those lyrics, everything on the whole record was about me so I came to the end of it and thought, 'This is so specific and this is what I want to say.' Everything else in that song is related to Fremantle. It's a blue-collar song about where I work [the Railway Hotel, the only pub in WA with a license to open at 6am], where my uncle worked, where he died, in Fremantle, and he actually said he wanted to be buried within earshot of the Fremantle bells."

Eleventh live is a powerful advertisement. The band, a collection of gregarious, good-natured friends, becomes entirely sullen, at times enraged, when performing. "When we started I thought I'd be a humorous character but it's different up there," Lenton concedes. "You are performing. That's what I thought would be ideal, in between music you'd entertain the crowd with witty banter, but I'm never in the mood."

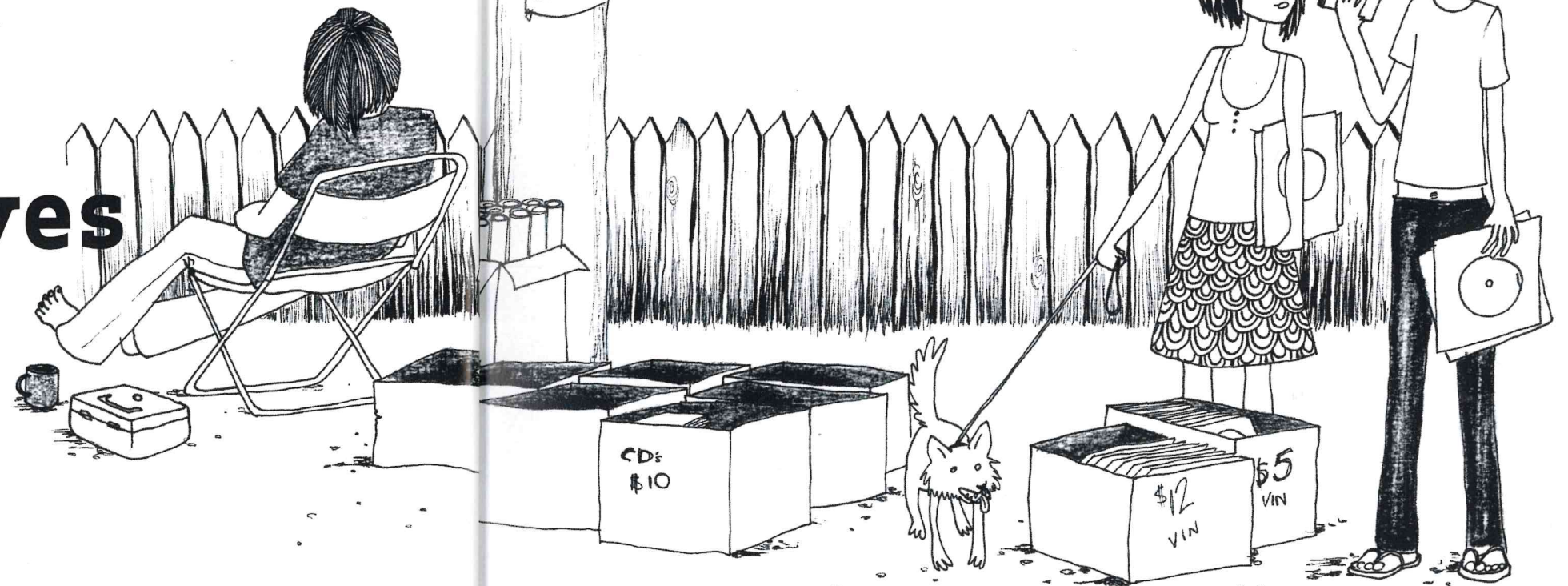
"I'd love to be comfortable because I think it'd make for a better performance. There's something about being exposed that hasn't ever really sat that well with me," he says. "I think I will eventually, but not at the moment. It's not really the singing, it's the thought that if you go watch a band you will usually concentrate on the vocalist. I'm pretty skeptical a lot of the time so that gets in my head: what if there's a dude out there like me who thinks my fucking hair should be parted on the other side?"



Empty Shelves

Sydney's independent record stores face uncertain times

Story by Emmy Hennings
Illustration by Kristy Milliken



Chris Wu pauses philosophically, and shakes his head.

"It's very hard," he says, reflecting on his time at the helm of Gifted – the latest in a line of independent Sydney record stores to splutter and fail. "I think it was very hard for me not to say yes to running the store, because it's every music-loving person's dream, to own a record shop."

A beanpole 30-year-old with a checked jumper, a reflective air and the ability to talk in flowing, articulate paragraphs, Chris Wu is draped along a café chair in Surry Hills, just around the corner from the current office of his label and touring company, Popfrenzy. He opened Gifted on top of his work at Popfrenzy when the opportunity for a space with "a lock-up garage and a kind of shopfront" arose in May 2005. Tucked up a side street not far from where we're sitting, Gifted was arranged like a fantasy living room: an airy, white-washed space with a large couch and a bunch of well-thumbed magazines always to hand. "All the furniture was bought really cheaply, or we just took it from the road," Chris says, explaining the Gifted set-up. "The only things we really paid for were the shelves – we got some friends of ours to make them."

Gifted was run by people whose tastes could be broadly classified as 'indie', but the store also carried underground hip-hop, electronica, even baile funk: as long as it was "at the forefront of new music", Gifted would stock it. That is, until they ran out of money. The store lasted almost exactly twelve months – not long, but long enough for Chris and his co-manager Tommy to realise that their business simply wasn't viable.

"You have in your mind how many CDs you need to sell each week, and it really is quite simple figures," says Chris. "We weren't getting anywhere close to that amount: after about four or five months we knew we were really struggling. We had regulars, but the problem with a shop like ours is that you need a constant turnover. We failed because people weren't buying, and they weren't buying because we didn't have any new stock, but we didn't have any new stock because people weren't buying! We would have loved to have ordered more stock, but we just didn't have the money, or when we did, we had to pay rent – there goes X amount of thousands."

Rent is the millstone around the neck of every Sydneysider, resident or business owner. Rent in Sydney is high: disproportionately high compared to the rest of NSW and even

higher when compared with Australia as a whole. According to the NSW Office of Fair Trading, 80% of new small businesses fail within the first five years, and for businesses in Sydney, rent is often the factor that tips the scales. Combined with a State government and city councils whose appetite for urban development is nothing less than salivating, the conditions mean that independent spaces struggle for a secure foothold.

Gifted hasn't been the only recent casualty of Sydney's savage rent prices. Just a few minutes walk up the main Surry Hills thoroughfare of Bourke Street, fellow independent record store Sound and Fury also foundered.

"We both lasted for almost exactly the same period of time," ponders Adam Mills, ex-owner of Sound and Fury, on the parallel fate of himself and his near neighbours. "Gifted opened up within a month of us opening up, and they were closed within a month of us closing. It's too scary."

Sound and Fury was an ambitious concept – perhaps a little too ambitious. Occupying a large space on Bourke St underneath one of the many 'prestige living' apartment complexes that dot the city, its aim was to

stock the best in experimental music from around the world, including a fair slice of the ever-expanding CD-R scene.

"We definitely bit off more than we could chew with the shop," Adam says, assessing his mistakes. "We wanted to be this huge shop – a combination of Red Eye [Sydney] and Synaesthesia [Melbourne]. But we didn't have enough capital to build something that big. We went crazy with it and then halfway through we ran out of money ... We were spending too much money on rent. We weren't even *paying* rent, we were just amassing debt."

Still shaken by his brief, brutal experience at the business helm, Adam is back today behind the retail counter – but as an employee, not an owner. He meets me on his lunchbreak in the solid, sandstone heart of the Sydney CBD, dressed in the demure uniform of a large book chain. He's working for a store that, as a company, is representative of a retail model that depends upon selling lots of popular stock very cheaply. It's a model that Sound and Fury tried to deviate from, although Adam understands its merits.

"A shop like JB Hi-Fi," he says, speaking of the music business, "opening up a little

way before we did – they succeed because no one's gonna pay \$28 or \$29 for a CD that they can get for \$23. It doesn't matter how against 'corporate this' or 'JB that' they are – I'm gonna try and save six bucks if I can on a CD. They do carry everything; everything that Inertia [distribution] has, they stock. We tried to combat that by going further out and getting stuff that was totally unique, which is fine, but you can't do that on a big scale, because there are only a few people who'll be interested in buying some CD-R that someone in Oklahoma's made. The more CD-Rs we got in, the more we sold, because a CD-R is ten bucks, so people can take a punt on it. But at the same time, artists aren't producing them in big enough quantities to sell massive amounts."

The rise of the 'big box' retailer – be it in music, books or groceries – and the subsequent decline of independent shops, is a circumstance well documented across the Western world. It is a circumstance that speaks to the rapidly changing relationship between stores and consumers: at a time when consumer 'choice' has increased exponentially, via the Internet, the role of non-virtual shops becomes akin to that of a glorified warehouse. Retailers can certainly use the internet to their advantage, as a

research and purchasing tool of their own, but the central role that an independent record store once played as an information hub for various subcultures and underground scenes is now declining. Who needs a local shop with limited stock when you can effectively trawl the globe for what you want? When it comes to music, the role of downloading and peer-to-peer file sharing only adds to the difficulties that a small store faces.

Chris Wu offers this analysis of the problem: "JB Hi-Fi are very smart. They have a very good range – whoever does the ordering knows their stuff. But I guess what they realise is that gone are the days when you would go into a record store and speak to them, in order to find out what was going on. They know that nowadays, when people go to a record store, they know exactly what they want. You can find it all online now: you can listen to it all, you can read about it, you can find out everything about that release. The only thing you haven't got is the actual CD, and so, now that you know about it, you just go in and buy it ... That customer-shop relationship has really changed."

Both Gifted and Sound and Fury were established with the aim of creating a space that would serve as a central, public focus for



a particular music community. Regular live performances, the chance to stock releases from an in-house label, and the development of long-term relationships with record buyers – these were the elements that both stores tried to build upon. It's an old-fashioned model, and it comes as no surprise to hear that Chris Wu and Adam Mills both spent their formative record-buying years in the handful of independent Sydney stores that pioneered just such a mode of operation.

"I grew up going to Phantom and Waterfront, Red Eye, Silver Rocket," says Chris, recalling some of the legendary Sydney stores that flowered in the wake of punk. "I went there just to say that I went there once a week! It was always a dream [to be like that]."

"Waterfront was my favourite record store when I was a teenager," Adam comments. "When we opened up we got a lot of people saying 'Oh, your store reminds me of how Waterfront used to be.' That was really exciting to have people compare it to that shop, because that place was amazing."

Stores like Waterfront rode out a period where the independent music community in Sydney – and elsewhere – was tight-knit and, to a large extent, self-reliant. But

the mainstreaming of independent music throughout the 1990s significantly eroded the niche role that such stores once played. Frank Cotterell, former manager of Waterfront, saw the shift as it happened.

"I guess with Nirvana breaking big, companies said 'Okay, there's going to be a lot of cash here,'" he says. "Therefore, we're going to do the deals with all the chain stores." All of a sudden we were selling 1000 Nirvana records, but then it went down to 50. People like You Am I were our friends: with their first three records they'd come into the store and sign 500 CDs and posters, and drink Coopers with us. Nobody in the big stores really cared about Australian independent music, but then when those bands became big ... the [distribution] deals were happening with all the big stores. We kind of lost our business then. It became other people's business."

Frank has had thirty years in the record industry, and while he is generous in his praise of those who have tried to carry on in the Waterfront tradition, he is also realistic about their chances of success. "I can't imagine someone who has a love of music, and who wants to serve a particular niche, starting out today," he says. "I want to give those

stores an award, just for standing up and wanting to be like that, but it's never going to work."

Waterfront began as a punk/hardcore store, and it's probably fair to say that hardcore, in particular, remains one of the few subcultures capable of sustaining its own infrastructure, quite removed from the mainstream. It is a movement large enough to support a significant number of bands, labels and DIY venues, and, with its sustained critique of consumer capitalism, one of the few to try and tinker with prevalent economic models. A hardcore shop might seem like a contradiction in terms, yet a focus on community over sales seems, perversely, to ensure a measure of success.

Paint It Black – a punk/hardcores specialist with a sideline in left-field indie – is a store that has bucked the Sydney trend by managing to stay open: two-and-a-half years and counting. It took its name and its philosophy from a song by Melbourne hardcore band Far-Left Limit: 'When I see a billboard I want to paint it black.' Needless to say, that particular 7" is always kept in stock.

The place survives because, rather than in spite of, strict punk economics: maintenance

and repairs are DIY, stock is sold for little more than its cost price, and its proprietors are willing to work without pay. "This place isn't profit-driven, as you may have noticed," laughs Aaron Evil, one of a few nearly full-time volunteers who keep the store running. "I think that our ultimate goal would be to pay wages and have enough money to continue the turnover of the shop, but we're not really aimed at expanding."

Paint It Black is a space where the welcome you get is not contingent on your ability to spend money; its well-worn couch receives a steady stream of friends, pets, and passers-by. "I hate that sterile thing with shops," comments Aaron. "Even some of the more indie shops in Sydney are a bit too like that, a bit too in-and-out. We wanted to have a place where you could hang out, where you could talk some shit – I don't know, like a clubhouse?"

It is a shoebox-sized store; a tiny rectangle of space squeezed into a row of shopfronts on Enmore Rd – a street that once formed part of the famed 'bohemian' thoroughfare of Newtown. It's a bohemia that has increasingly given way to gentrification, but Aaron argues that some of the area's former character has remained.

"The people are still around. The shops have changed, but the same people who brought that culture to the place are still here. I figure that we're trying to be a throwback to those times."

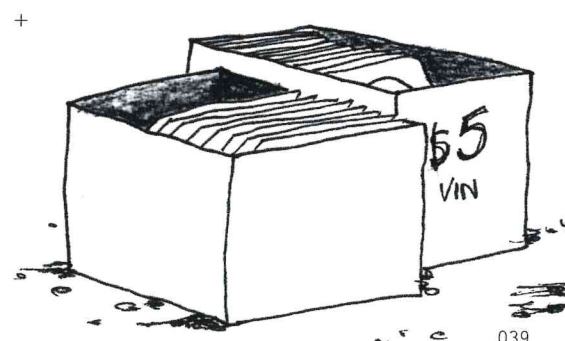
But with a reliance on a limited – one could well say diminishing – number of dedicated customers, is the independent record store a 'throwback' whose days are inevitably numbered? Disadvantaged by the cost of paying rent, the tight margin of a small store is now, more than ever, in danger of being completely eroded by the growing ability of music fans to listen and research online, at their leisure. The role of the Internet within the music industry is a complex one, neither entirely good nor bad. Its many effects, however, including the erosion of the artefact (CD or vinyl) in favour of digital files; the spread of knowledge across geographic boundaries and hence the breakdown of subcultures once strictly delineated; and the ability of listeners to circumvent purchase entirely, represent an irreversible change in patterns of music consumption.

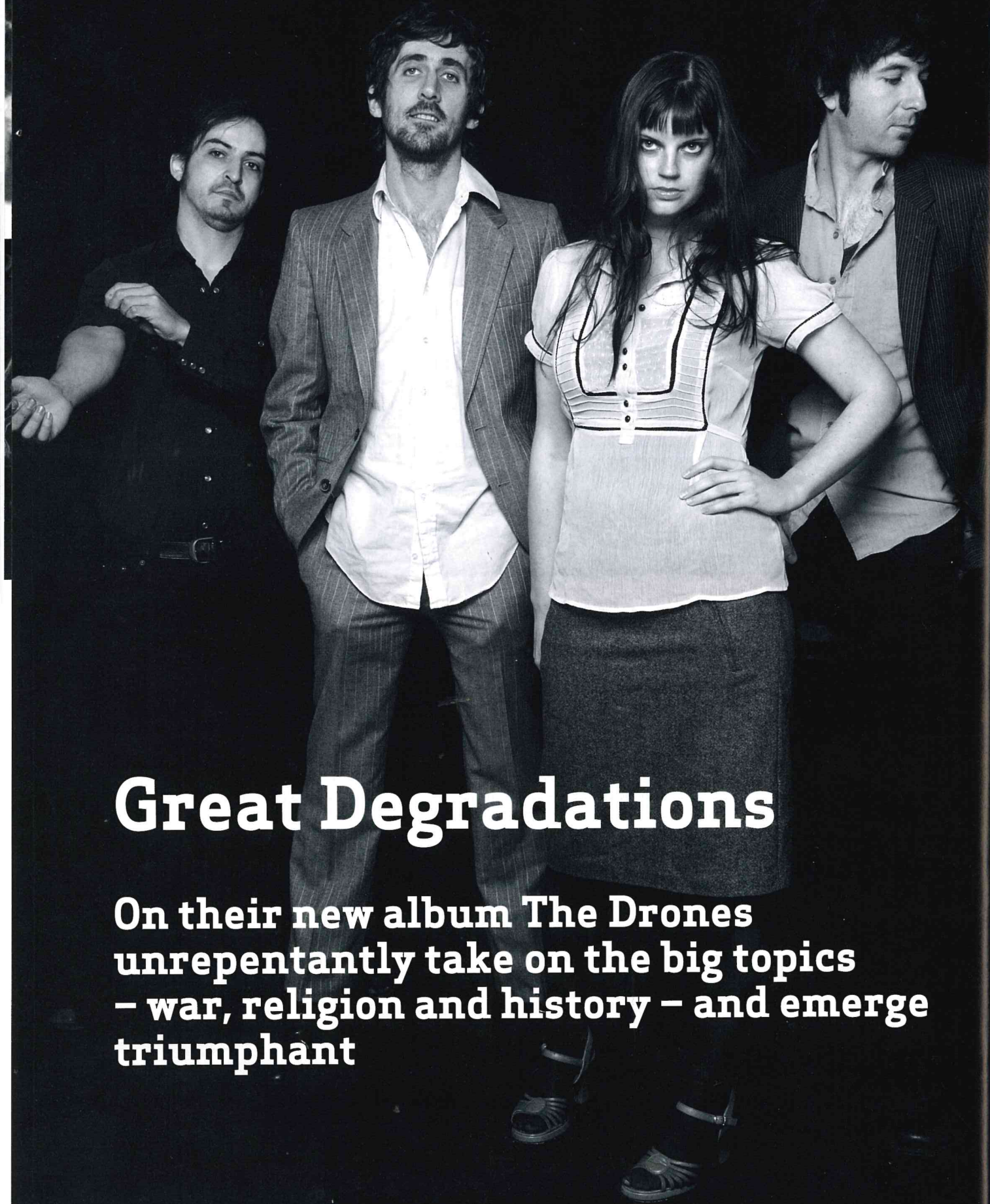
"You walk the line," observes Frank Cotterell, pondering the future of his current store, Mojo Music. "We're here for a few

more years, but I wonder if in five years' time anyone is going to be here."

Adam Mills, for one, sees little chance for a store like the one he tried to create with Sound and Fury. "That's got a lot to do with wounds still being fresh and that sort of thing," he acknowledges. "But it seems like with the whole music retail thing there's a paradigm shift happening, with iTunes, and with JB Hi-Fi undercutting everyone on price. I read somewhere the other day that in some sectors vinyl is actually outselling CDs, and whether that means CDs are on the way out in favour of vinyl I don't know. But the little independent store, I don't think there's much future in it."

"I'll always have a bit of hope that maybe we could do something again," he says, "but it was a pretty bleak year, seeing it from the other side of the counter."





Great Degradations

On their new album *The Drones* unrepentantly take on the big topics – war, religion and history – and emerge triumphant

Story by Ben Gook
Photos by Cecelia Bedford (Gareth solo shots)

"I'm recording, shut up" – so begins *Gala Mill*, The Drones' third and latest album of existential ballads and beer-soaked barnstormers. It's an abrupt start. Half of the first syllable is lost in the moments between hitting 'record' and the machine's reaction.

This laconic phrase stands alone – it's the only obvious human presence for the first twenty seconds of the album. Dogs bark in the distance. Crickets sing beneath the grass. Then an electric guitar comes crashing through the door with the menace of a wronged man. Its ugly and distorted form portends violence, uncertainty and hostility.

When the band lumbers in behind it, like a rough-and-ready posse, Gareth Liddiard gives the menace a human voice as he delivers the proper opening lines.

Strontium 90 / Removed from milk

This is 'Jezebel', a song as malignant as its title is seemingly benign – a song ridden with cancerous thoughts, shocking visions and depictions of hatred. It's a song about madness and horror. About feeling hysterical and helpless. And a radioactive cow named Jezebel – a glowing reminder of Australia's history of nuclear testing. It's a gloriously suffocating way to start a record that ruminates on 2000 years of terror, love, fragility and joy and spits them out with rude disregard.

Cancer's airborne now / Do you hear the sound? / I was hanging out the washing, man / As the rain come falling down / Now the grass like snakes / Has crowns of iodine and fire / On 'Jezebel's luminescence / I swear to you my heart's desire

Sipping on beer and slowly burning through cigarettes in his Northcote lounge-room, Liddiard – songwriter, guitarist and lyricist with The Drones – offers up an explanation or two about what inspired this harrowing song. "Jezebel's the cow that ate nuclear fallout in Northern Queensland, near where I was born," he starts, talking with the same gnarled voice he sings with, all squashed vowels and lazy diction. Fiona Kitschin, bass player with The Drones and Liddiard's partner, prepares dinner in the kitchen as the interview carries on in the lounge-room. An acoustic guitar leans against the red couch over Liddiard's shoulder. An unplugged electric guitar sits in his lap, his fingers intermittently wandering the fretboard – it's the shiny new baby of Dan Kelly, Liddiard's

former housemate and bandmate (he was in Kelly's backing band, The Alpha Males), who is over for a meal and a few beers.

"They did heaps of nuclear tests in Australia – in South Australia and off the North West Shelf in the ocean," Liddiard continues, fingers wandering. "All up in the Southern Hemisphere in one year, I think 1962 or 1963, they let off sixty atomic and hydrogen bombs. Then the wind blew across the northwest to the northeast. It rained and the cows ate this grass that'd been polluted with all this fallout. Yet at about the same time they were pushing kids to drink more milk to help the dairy industry. So kids were drinking all this shit and the CSIRO were using bones from autopsies of kids who died of unnatural causes. They were grinding them up and testing for levels of strontium 90 and iodine."

And that's just the topic in the first verse. 'Jezebel' is an ambitious and, by Gareth's own admission, heavy song. "It was going to have a different name that was more hysterical – but I figured, fuck it, name it after a cow," he says with blunt irony. "It was going to be called 'Death and Only Death' or something equally as horrible as the song."

Musically, 'Jezebel' stutters, clambers and then explodes, equally holding back and yielding to nihilism with disgust. The band follows Liddiard's lines to their darkest places, embellishing and emphasising in the verses, then finding a bittersweet hope and light in the chorus.

"The song's a catalogue of nasty shit you see on TV," he says, distilling seven gruesome minutes into a central idea, "like Daniel Pearl, the first journalist [in the Middle East] getting his head chopped off on video."

Yeah, Dan Pearl / They cut your head off on TV / But I am not a camera / A man is not an effigy / But still, all of this horror / Has made a trench out of my soul / I'm gonna have to fall in love / With a blind girl / So that she will not see / The shame that I know

As Liddiard laconically rattles off what makes up the song's tattered catalogue, the weight of the modern world seems to be bearing down on this one track. "It's got everything in it. I can't remember writing it. We hadn't played it before we recorded it, so I was excited about it. It goes from the Beslan [Russian hostage] thing to the Middle Eastern shit to the never-ending war they've got planned for us now," he says, brow furrowed.

All this evident thought comes with a payoff: The Drones prove with *Gala Mill* they're a band whose work is of an intensity without par in Australian music right now. But the three albums they have released so far are directed toward radically different ends. *Here Come the Lies*, the 2002 album that was the band's first widely available release, celebrated their ear-drum-shattering power and visceral presence as a live band. It was put to tape with a kind of abandon, and it plays like it at home – a thing as close as a studio recording comes to capturing the heady catharsis of over-cranked guitars and Friday night sweat. *Wait Long by the River and the Bodies of Your Enemies Will Float By* from 2005 was more ambitious, an attempt to bring together the band's ballads and rockers with a dash of experimentation: field recordings crackle, songs veer off to white-outs of piano notes and washed-up feedback. And *Gala Mill* was recorded in more relaxed circumstances – it was largely recorded sitting down, Liddiard says – but its commitment to an uncompromising idea bears a different kind of intensity to that wrought by volume. The space in these songs allows Liddiard's lyrics to present themselves as never before. Here, then, it's an intensity of lyrical focus and vision. This is most apparent in the album's stunning bookends – 'Jezebel' and 'Sixteen Straws', the latter a stark song with its genesis in a traditional Australian convict song ('Moreton Bay') and Liddiard's fertile imagination.

Taken together, Liddiard's work with The Drones regularly describes a kind of existential horror. He etches a place of mental horrors; where outside breaks in and dirties up the pure heart: the child becomes criminal, the cow becomes radioactive, the man becomes puppet in a fifty-year war. But as we talk on a cold Melbourne night, it's 'Jezebel' that elicits the strongest response from Liddiard. Its subjects seem the most concrete and topical of all The Drones' material so far, a collection of interlinked thoughts on the contemporary global situation. After the cow's opening stanza, the lyrics shift their action and era by deploying that old literary favourite – epistolary. "But you wrote me a letter," Liddiard sings at the start of the second verse, "and this is how it went."

It said 'we're backing up the supply lines / The first division's crossing the Nile / Through the rushes and up the side / And into the machine gun fire / Tell me that this is not a dream / I've become a steel spring / Uranium tips night vision

cruise missiles / Gonna cut the belly out of the sky / I rode an Abrams / We stopped in Bethlehem / They made the answers here / But there weren't so many questions then ...'

For the remaining five minutes, the song tours other lands, conflicts and moments of hysteria. “The whole thing is based in North Africa,” Liddiard says of its middle and ending sections. “There is a lot Muslim folks in the North of Africa – I’m sure this [war] will wind up there with them. It always does. It did in World War I and World War II – why is that going to change? If we’re going to wage war against Muslims – which is what we’re doing – why should it be any different to the last 1600 years of Muslim and Christian struggle for dominance?” Liddiard asks. “When they say [this war’s] not about religion, it is – it’s the most radical parts, but that’s what it is,” he adds, refuting the counterarguments.

Such lines of thought are his way. He talks in a rambling meter that shoots off on tangents and follows them to the point of exhaustion, holding them up, turning them, and letting the light in a few different ways. Clear logic and direct links often remain hidden, as if they were too obvious to mention. The evident thought and wit of his lyrics conveys this too – the poetic compression leaves more unsaid than said. ‘Jezebel’ is a stunning example of this; a song that only betrays its lyrical and topical ambitions when its verses are flayed in front of you. Even then, the effect is dulled. If, as has been said, ninety percent of musicianship is in the phrasing, you need to hear the thing to capture its full power. Liddiard’s delivery, too, is an idiosyncratic part of the band’s draw – sometimes bordering on inscrutable, the urgency of his vocals expresses something beyond the words.

Bomb proof the embassy / Give infanticide a cemetery / You look so good on the late night news / With your curtain and your deed / I love you like a violin / I hunt you like an amputee

It takes a certain madness or genius to glue together such disparate eras and ideas in one place. But the one true moment of inspiration for this monumental song is the start of the second Iraq war. Travelling in the United States at the launch of that conflict, Liddiard was struck by the blind faith and wide-ranging idiocy of the American people, particularly in their military adventures. “Everyone’s saying how these soldiers are saints and it’s not their war. And, yeah, it’s true, the majority of them are in a bad position and they shouldn’t be there. But there’s an element of guys who are loving it and they like killing people and they like killing ‘sand niggers’. So don’t

fucking canonise them. That’s the whole thing with ‘hunt you like an amputee’ – it’s this desperate, horrible and patriotic love that Americans can have, which is just so sickening. So the song’s anti-everything. If we’re going to be xenophobic, then let’s do it like this and write everybody off,” he says.

Oh new scar / You have raised the bar / Goliath rides an oil drum raft / Through a cyclone in my ear drums / You don't want a tyrant / We're sure / You'd prefer a civil war / And I am gonna lose my skin

“Unfortunately, it’s same old story – now you and I can’t go to Iraq and places like that,” Liddiard says. “They’ve fucked it, all these paranoid arseholes – whether it’s the goodies or the baddies doing it. It’s fucked, in a selfish way, that they’ve wrecked the world for us. John Howard’s said we’re going to be doing this for fifty years. I’ll be eighty years old – and hopefully I’ll make it to eighty. Obviously those 100,000 people in Iraq killed for doing nothing, they’re not going to get to that age. It’s horrific.”

I ain't gonna see you again / Again

Convicts. Colonies. Cannibals. All three take their place at the heart of *Gala Mill*. Indeed, The Drones have done something intentionally uncool with the new record – they went and put together a set of songs that draws heavily from, and challenges, the history and mythology of white Australia. Recording in a convict-era mill in Tasmania meant the band was in the perfect place to conjure up these ghosts from the pages of history.

Considering this eighteen months later, Liddiard appears to have relished the challenge. “It’s so daggy to sing about Australia,” he says. “Part of [*Gala Mill*] was writing some colonial songs because people hate that shit. Well, they don’t hate it, they get the cringe. So to me it’s just like, ‘Cool, it makes you cringe,’ I’m going to play it.”

This provocative streak seems deeply ingrained. “I wasn’t fond of cool people in high school. I always had a grudge. I’m instantly attracted to something that someone doesn’t think is cool,” he says. “Taste and coolness – I hate that shit. It’s just another set of rules. I like Leonard Cohen and I like Abba. If it’s got a smattering of interesting stuff in it, then I couldn’t give a fuck.”

This seems like a guiding philosophy for The Drones – a kind of resignation combined with an unwillingness to compromise. It’s the force of their own convictions and the strength of their vision that makes them such a

revered band. They’re cloaked by the kind of mythology *NME*-style rags would lap up – the years of low-paying slog, the harsh months in caravan parks, the blistering live show, the legal trouble, the label wrangling – but the band never consciously trades on it. Liddiard, for one, makes several sly references to hating ‘haircut’ rock and the *NME* – both symbols of alternative rock’s current obsession with status. (He uses both as shorthand for everything he considers important music *not* to be – dismissively referring to a group once in the interview as “just a bunch of hairdos”.)

So for *Gala Mill*, the model was less Jet-style poseur rock than it was seminal 1970s and 1980s Australian punks X. Liddiard uses *Aspirations*, X’s freewheeling debut studio record, as an example of the approach he wanted to bring to this round of recording. *Aspirations* “is awesome,” he says. “It’s completely Australian. Total Aussie. This yobbo accent – there’s not a hint of trying to be American or anything like that. The sense of humour is really Australian. It’s hard rockin’ and songs are about fucked things that happened, but told in a funny way. It was made in a really carefree way, too.”

To Liddiard this reckless Australian spirit is what makes X more appealing than someone like The Saints (who he fingers for putting on a Yank singing accent). X went in with the intention of recording a single, as Liddiard tells it, and after the first track failed to get the thumbs up from the engineer, the subsequent tracks only suffered the same response. X had recorded fifteen songs and none them was a single. This process inadvertently saw them cut one of the best albums to emerge from Australia’s early punk scene.

Whether truth or myth, it was this insouciant approach The Drones wanted to mirror in their efforts recording *Gala Mill*. New drummer Mike Noga had just joined the band, Liddiard recounts. “He was from Tassie so it was his idea to go there. We wanted to go record for the fuck of it and not in a studio, because that’d be boring.” A series of phone calls to Noga’s friends and relatives followed. Five days later the band was on its way to a huge old mill with recording equipment and knob-twiddler/mic-placer Aaron Cupples (guitarist with Dan Kelly and The Alpha Males) in tow. The intention wasn’t to craft an amazing album, but to do some recording and play around with some half-finished songs. “This record was just something to do,” he says, nonchalantly. At the time, the band’s second record, *Wait Long by the River...*, was delayed under reams of lawyer’s documents, so they retreated to Tasmania when the chance arose.

“We smoked a lot of pot, drank heaps of booze, went for swims in the river and went for walks in the country. It was fucking cool,” Liddiard says. The band would sit around at night playing songs, filling in the gaps and getting them ready to record the next day. “Then we’d sit down the next day and bang it out in two takes each – one [test] run through, then just go and see what happened,” he says. “We were down there for a week. It felt like a holiday. By the time we got out of there and we’d finished the album, we were like ‘wow’. There was no effort at all, really.”

Although they probably won’t return to the mill for the next record, the sessions were preferable to the usual studio deal. “Generally, the studio can be such a headfuck – because of the pressure and the money – it’s almost like a lab,” Liddiard says.

“It’s fun [in the studio] but it’s a different headspace to being in the country in a convict-built mill, doodling,” he says. The relaxed approach was integral to their methods while there: “If it doesn’t work, don’t bother fixing it, just chuck it in the bin,” he says of their philosophy.

Consequently, Liddiard doesn’t think people should consider *Gala Mill* a defining document in the progression of The Drones. “By no means is it a statement of where we’re going – mellowing out or whatever. Not that I’d care if we were mellowing out, but people might think we’ve lost our edge – you know, doing a Nick Cave or something – but I’m not 45 yet,” he says.

This flash of concern seems momentarily uncharacteristic, the earlier admonishment of coolness still ringing out. But then he admits to thoughts about a particularly important

enough to see it receive the Australian Music Prize (AMP). These clutches of fame and recognition are the type of thing to turn away any seasoned elitist.

Nevertheless, the AMP awarded landed \$25,000 in the band’s bank account. No small sum when you’re living, as Liddiard notes, “hand to mouth”. The award also momentarily saw them thrust into the spotlight. Few moments were stranger this year than seeing The Drones, heroes of a hundred ragged late nights, appear bright-and-early on Channel Nine’s *Today* show – crackling in the morning light but unruffled by the slick interview moves of non-icon Richard Wilkins.

As this TV appearance suggests, their last record exposed them to previously unseen regions of the music industry. The music industry is a horrible thing filled with well-meaning people, claims Liddiard, commenting on what he saw during those months. “I couldn’t finger anyone and say ‘this guy’s fucked’. It is like everyone took a wrong turn one day and we ended up in a shit place. The more you get to know it, the worse it is,” he says.

It’s easy to grasp, then, that there’s no ‘market strategy’ behind The Drones’ music. To Liddiard, it’s a straightforward thing. “We’re not trying to impress some UK market or American market,” he says. “It’s about electric guitars. You plug ‘em in and you turn ‘em up really loud. It’s completely fucking juvenile. As you get older, you mature and it matures with you, but it shouldn’t pretend to be anything but juvenile. It’s that simple. We’ve had legal trouble in the past and you just go, ‘Fuck, all I want to do is get something like this’,” he says, thrusting a

put together the vaunted All Tomorrow’s Parties festivals in the US and UK. The Drones were signed after the label heads saw a “shit show – the worst show we’d played in ages – at the Prince of Wales [in Melbourne],” according to Liddiard. But with the contract ink now dry and album ready, the band’s heading to Europe for a tour straight after the run of Australian album launch shows ends.

The Drones will no doubt hope the tour runs a little better than moments of their most recent – and second – tour to the region. After wandering around the Continent like ragged Antipodean gypsies, they eventually based themselves in Berlin. When pressed Liddiard stresses this was for the centrality and affordability the city offered, not because of the Nick Cave connection.

“After four months of touring, the record company just looked at us and went ‘ergh’,” he recounts. “We were suffering from full-on exhaustion – we’d been living in a van basically. We all had our little nervous breakdowns there [in Berlin]. I wound up in hospital. I got gastro from stress. I went out one night and had a couple of absinthes. Before I knew it I was laying in a puddle of vomit and diarrhoea. I couldn’t stop vomiting. I was shitting and vomiting blood. We called an ambulance and off I went. I stayed there over night and they did all these tests. They couldn’t understand what I was saying. I think they suspected I was a helpless alcoholic because I must’ve stunk of booze.”

The overseas reception of *Wait Long...* was uniformly positive – all the tastemakers awarded it glowing reviews. It seemed reviewers couldn’t get hold of enough violent-sounding verbs and adjectives, relishing the chance to litter their prose with the glass

Few moments were stranger this year than seeing The Drones appear bright-and-early on Channel Nine’s ‘Today’ show – crackling in the morning light but unruffled by the slick interview moves of non-icon Richard Wilkins.

and symbolic segment of their audience. “I get a bit paranoid. Our old crowd down at the Tote – the alcoholic set, the ones that were there at the start – they probably think we’ve gone soft.”

However the band may already be light beer in the old fans’ mouths by now – their last record garnered a big response from Triple J and rattled the critical gatekeepers

guitar in the air, “put it in an amp really loud with my mates and just go ‘right-o, let’s count it in and see what happens’.”

The irony, of course, is that ‘what happened’ in Tasmania over that week of recording should see the band gain even more European and American exposure. The record, like their last one, has been picked up by London-based ATP Records, the label run by the folks who

shards of second-hand aggression. They descended on the Drones’ music – whether live or on record – like crime reporters to a murder scene writing urgent lines about the pools of blood, the smell of gunpowder and the hint of unease. They found, there, in the jagged strings and unhinged abandon of these Australian upstarts, the authentic rock & roll thing from Down Under.

It should be interesting, then, to see how *Gala Mill* plays around the world. Its 'Australianness' should be understood differently outside local borders, transcending the cringe and becoming almost exotic.

Gala Mill undeniably charts some familiar lines in the Australian unconscious, if not Liddiard's unconscious. Be it the ragged blues lineage of The Scientists and Beasts of Bourbon or the down-and-out literature of Marcus Clarke and Henry Lawson. "Like certain events in your life, certain things you read connect with you more than others," Liddiard says. "By no means am I a scholar. I've done too much damage to my memory to be that."

But nonetheless there's a poetic memory at work in his writing. He offers up the thirty-verse album-closer 'Sixteen Straws' as an instance where a story connected upon the first encounter. "I was reading a book and it had the first verse of a song ('Moreton Bay') as an example of something they were talking about. I was like, 'Wow, that's a cool-sounding song, I wonder how the rest went?' So I thought, 'Fuck it, I'll make it up,' then I sat down and banged it out. I finished it while we were there [in Tasmania] – it was a good place to finish it."

Such a marrying of traditions and new angles is something that carries across all three of band's albums quite strongly. 'Downbound Train', 'Motherless Children' and 'Dekalb Blues' from *Here Come the Lies* are traditional songs given treatments that would make traditional bluesmen flinch. And *Gala Mill* has the band interpreting Karen Dalton's 'Move to the Country' and cribbing from Sister Rosetta Tharpe's 'I Looked Down the Line and I Wondered'. While *Gala's* 'Sixteen Straws' forges this violent re-imagination of 'Moreton Bay', a traditional song recorded by everyone from John Denver to Weddings Parties Anything.

One Sunday morning / While I was out walking / By the Brisbane's waters / I chanced to stray / There I found a prisoner / Laid half in the water / He'd seen me coming / And he began to say

The straws of the title refer to an arcane method of assuaging Catholic guilt. In convict settlements, groups of despondent Catholics would draw straws. Those who drew the long and the short were fated: the long draw would be killed and the short would be killer. As suicide is a Catholic sin, all of those involved who lived could repent before God and magistrate, then be summarily killed by colonial authorities.

"It was an excuse to tell a ripping yarn,"

Liddiard says of the song. "There was a Jew who was nice enough to let a bunch of Catholics top him so they could go to heaven without having to deal with hell. I thought that was a nice gesture from a guy who couldn't give a fuck about Catholics. Maybe he didn't go there of his own will, but from all accounts that's what happened."

Liddiard says that "freaky little things" like the true story behind 'Sixteen Straws' are the types of tales that appeal to him. But the 'things' don't appear to be entirely random. What also carries across all three Drones records are the songs of outcasts, loners and whatever else you want to call marginal figures. Gareth Liddiard's interest in the tales untold in modern Australian music is part reaction and part fascination. Stories of prisoners and convicts, in particular, appeal to him for personal reasons.

"I guess I've known a lot of people who've been to prison – although I've never really talked to them about it. That's what piqued my interest when I was young, then I read a lot about it. I'm probably never going to go there, so there's a fascination in that," he says.

"And then there's the thing," Liddiard says, paraphrasing Dostoyevsky, "that you can totally rate a civilisation by their prison system. Like, Americans reckon they're cool when they condemn Iraq, China and Russia, then they go and put people in an electric chair," he says, adding a shocked emphasis to this barbaric means of execution. "At least the Russians have the decency to not put you on death row; they just take you out the back and shoot you in the back of the head. So if we're going to talk brutality, who is more atavistic and horrible?"

"Regardless, if you're brutalising people, nine times out of ten it's only because you've been brutalised yourself. So why, then, is a suitable punishment to brutalise you more? If you're poor and you go and commit a crime, they just make you poorer. There really is no logic. So I can't help but wonder and take interest in an answer," he says.

Elsewhere on the album, this emerges as a concern too. With 'Words from the Executioner to Alexander Pearce', Liddiard again addresses the matter of human immorality and barbarity. Centred on a simple guitar and drum instrumentation, the spare arrangement emphasises the starkness of the narrative: Alexander Pearce, famed cannibal and prison-yard hero, meets his death at the hands of a man despised by the inmates.

Pearce's story is the basis of a hundred

long tales, but its essence seems relatively uncontroversial. Escaping from the Sarah Island Macquarie Harbour settlement with a band of seven men in 1822, Pearce and his group fought through the thick foliage and difficult terrain of western Tasmania for over 100 days. Their plight grew more desperate until members of the crew became physically and mentally weak. As food became scarce, the group began choosing targets among their number and, one by one, knocked them off with an axe blow to the head. Pearce was captured alone and pleaded to the magistrate that he had cannibalised the other men. This confession was disbelieved and he was sent back to prison, a hero in chains. Following his next escape with fellow prisoner Thomas Cox, Pearce was caught with bits of Cox in his pockets. He was promptly taken to Hobart and hanged.

"In Tasmania they love [Pearce]," Liddiard says. "Everyone loves a freak." Pearce is their one-up tale on Victoria's Ned Kelly, he suggests. But it's been a scandal from the start – *The Hobart Town Gazette's* description of Pearce on the dock suitably overdosed on literary melodrama: he was "laden with the weight of human blood, and believed to have banqueted on human flesh." Liddiard was exposed to Pearce's tale while travelling in Tasmania and something about this story snagged at his memory. Something to do, it seems, with Pearce's dogged, animalistic persistence and drive for freedom.

"He was a survivor and he was hard as fucking nails. He'd overcome unimaginable things. You can't imagine walking across mountains—and I've been to where he was and what he had to do get through. The vegetation's like that," he says, holding a hand up against his nose. "It's inconceivable to do what they did. No wonder they ate each other – by the time they got to eating each other, I'm not sure it was that big a deal."

"He was an evil bastard by the end. But he'd done what God or Charles Darwin or whoever it is had intended, which was just to go on and survive. Then one day they hung him. It seemed like such a shame. He'd done everything he could in a lawless land to survive," Liddiard says, "even though he went away from humanity and was an animal by the end of it. He survived with what he had, which was just a world of brutality and horror. So, yeah, I thought, poor guy."

Liddiard outlines Pearce's tale from the viewpoint of the executioner for good reason. "He was a cunt, too," Liddiard quickly declares of the executioner, "I doubt he would have felt any connection with Pearce. But if he did, he wouldn't have been too far

off sympathy – they both kill people, they're both predators, whether or not either of them realised that."

In the end, Pearce's execution seems futile, the almost comical act of an authority without authority. "There was no fix for Pearce – he was so far from normal, you know; he was a kid once and he was such a long way from that; there was no going back from there. So the executioner's dealing the final blow, but in a sense this is Pearce going back – this is you in the womb as much as it is you in the grave. So it's as much as a full circle as you're going to get."

Well your chaplain loves you / Death row boys / More than he loves me / He abandons you to prayer / Turns so he won't see / You standing alone / As you were all long / To descend fear first / Abscond from the earth / Alone

We were meant to meet / Your exile is reached / You're home.

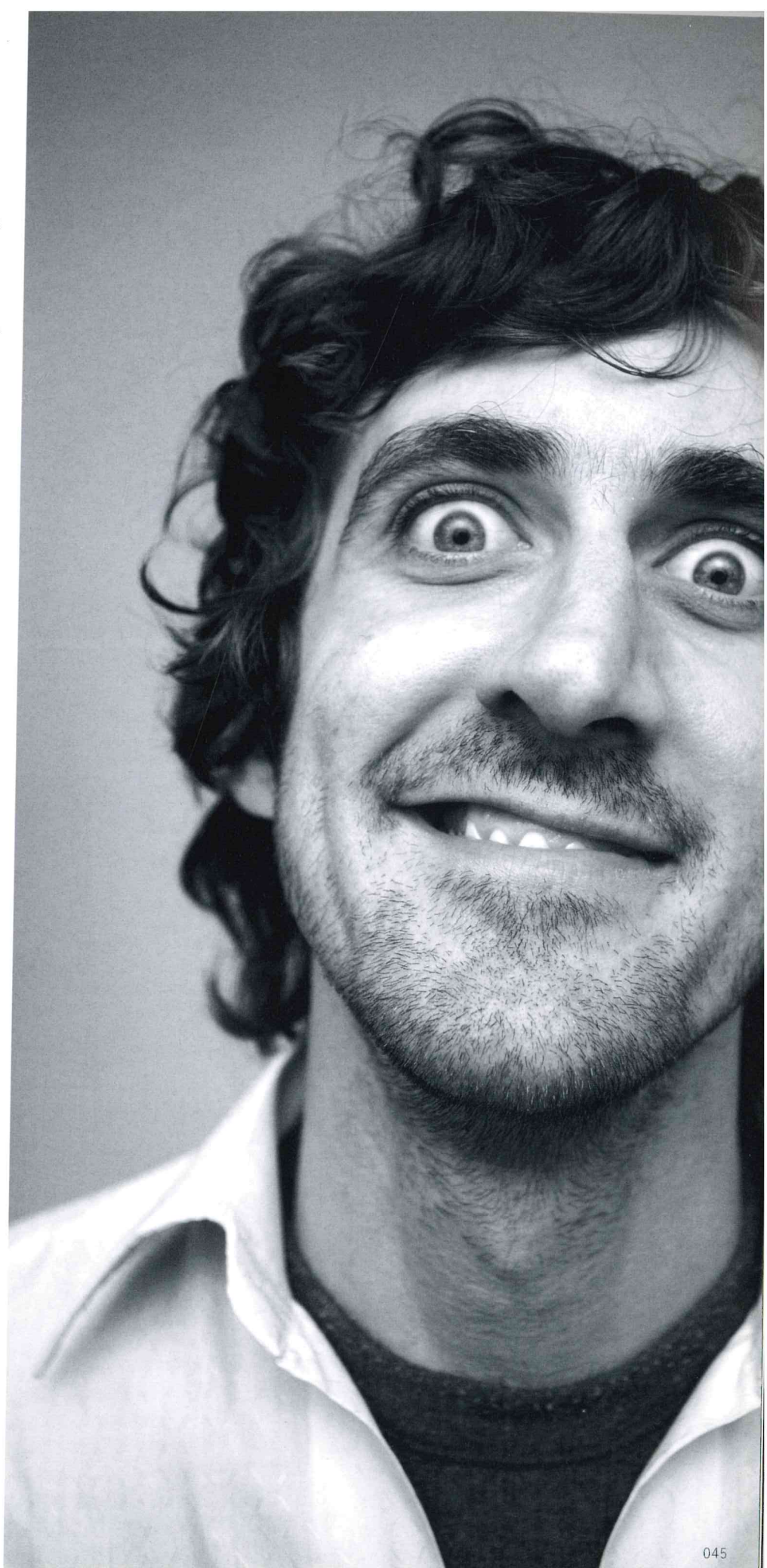
"Some priest has written a really great book about Pearce's travails," Liddiard says, talking of sources. "And it, like good art – not necessarily art art – but a good biography, good autobiography or even a good song, knows you just don't condemn anyone. If you just stay away from condemning someone you might learn something. Even like that *Downfall* film – the Hitler one – they didn't condemn him, so then you get a bit of insight into him."

But not everyone can handle such a treatment, as the controversy around that film suggests. "Some people think they'll be tainted with knowledge of things that aren't nice," Liddiard says, adopting a dainty accent. "But you're going to think the same thing, you're just going to know more about what you think. You'll be more solid in your convictions. Or you might change your opinion. In the end, you'll basically learn to like people more, which will stop people like Alexander Pearce and Hitler happening."

Of course, one other mark of good art is commitment to convictions in the face of a hundred options to depart from them. *Gala Mill* stands, then, as a true piece of art – committed, thoughtful and aware of its place. And The Drones, led onward by the charismatic Liddiard, stand on the cusp of something both great and well deserved.

I'm staring up into / A perfect night / Everything is so wrong / But the time is right / And for the first time now / I'm looking right at you / I am here now

+





In The Studio With Dappled Cities Fly

Story and Photos by Dappled Cities Fly

1. Recording in Los Angeles can do strange things to one's psyche. In this shot Dave tries desperately to keep the studio vibe 'up' by performing his Granddance. Perhaps that is why we have called the album by that name. Perhaps not. The first sessions for this record were cut in a studio called 'Sunset Sounds' on Sunset Blvd. Right in Hollywood. Basketball courts and free peanuts, and some other famous records were made there too. Because they were mainly drum and bass days at the beginning, the Granddance became our secret tribal dance to while away the hours.....

2. This is how we spent the labels money. On the freakiest golf course in all of LA we would place bets on putting. Inspirational, relaxing and damn good fun. Maybe we spent too long on the golf course? Nah. We did however beat our producers Jim Fairchild (he of Granddaddy fame) and Peter Walker, and won the right to total creative control in doing so.

That's what you get when you gamble on sport.

3. Look closely. Tim is not wearing any shoes. What does it mean? Are the Beatles dead? Granddancing can make your feet swell if you don't prepare. Tim is resting his weary feet, and rightly so, as he picks his way through another of the 400 layers of guitar parts on this mini-masterpiece. For the teeny, finicky bits we moved to Sonora Studios in Los Feliz. Parts of Elliot Smith's 'Figure 8' were recorded here.....that album follows us around like a ghost. A friendly ghost.

4. Dave is posing in this shot. Because his mother may see it, he has cleverly placed a bottle of water in the background to make it seem as though he is taking good care. In actual fact most days ended very very late, and besides ducking into the local 'Big Foot Lodge' for a bottle of apple cider, would end with a mega burrito at Gina's Taco Shack, on the highway right near the Glendale Holiday Inn. Try sleeping with THAT in your belly.

5. Sonora was replete with all manner of amazing instruments to add to our own odd assortment. You will hear some of them

on the Granddance record, including this special little fella. Not Tim, the harmonium.

It was one of our weapons of choice. As was growing a beard. Note Dave looking slightly amused in the background. Crazy kids.

6. We met lots of tattoo'd people in LA. I think they are born with them.

This baby was given to us by another band called La Rocca, as a 'good luck' studio voodoo doll. As soon as they left it in our possession we just had to deface it. David here is applying the first of many facial tattoo's on our studio baby. When we left the studio, and our tapes headed to Nashville for mixing with Jacquire King (mix dude for Tom Waits, Kings Of Leon, Modest Mouse), we forgot the baby. I hope she is still there and reminding all bands who pass through Sonora that we did indeed dance the Granddance.

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"I saw a Fugazi DVD and my brain just went boooom!"

Ground Components lay out five moments that helped define them as the band they are

Story by Craig Mathieson
Photos by Daniel Boud

If their debut album – *An Eye For a Brow, A Tooth For a Pick* – is a raucous, eclectic disc, it's at least in part a reflection of the varied experiences shared by Ground Components over the last four years. Having announced themselves with a pair of EPs, 2003's self-titled debut and 2004's 'It All Catches Up With You', the Melbourne quartet – vocalist Joe McGuigan, drummer Simon McGuigan, bassist Indra Adams and keyboardist Dallas Paxton – took two years to prepare the long player they wanted to make. Now they're catching up on lost time, with Joe McGuigan and Indra Adams sitting down at the Esplanade Hotel in their hometown just days after finishing a national tour with Dan Kelly and the Alpha Males and just days before *An Eye...* reached stores. But whatever eventuates now is influenced by their formative moments and the people they shared them with. Here are five that mattered.

The Kid

JOE: "Having Woody McDonald there from the start was awesome. He wasn't in the band, but he was right there. That's pretty unique. Before there was a band it was just me talking to him about doing something. I met him through my younger brother Tom, when Woody was still a hardcore kid from up near Ballarat. He came up and started living at our house. He didn't have any money so he'd sleep on our floor and try to live on Salvation Army hampers. He was really young at the time, maybe just 14. Woody used to read us Lester Bangs at night when we were all going to sleep, which was pretty cool. He got involved in [community radio station] RRR and he started getting stuff happening and it was kinda impressive the way he could just get things done. He was just like, 'It's cool, I'm ready to start doing stuff with you if you're ready'. It seemed very right when he

became our manager. We were all discovering things at the same time and we wanted to do that together. We also knew what we wanted to do; we wanted to tour a lot, for example. He booked all our gigs at the start, but at the start we mainly played house parties. The best were the demolition house parties, where the houses were scheduled to be knocked down. Then Woody got us a residency at Shake Some Action at 161. It could be frustrating for him, because he was only 16 and trying to get people in the music industry to take him seriously. When he stopped being our manager in 2004 it was truly an amicable thing."

Ticket To Ride

INDRA: "I went to high school with Tom McGuigan and Dallas. Tom was in a band with Joe called Vial 8 and he and I were in the same circle of friends, and Tom would



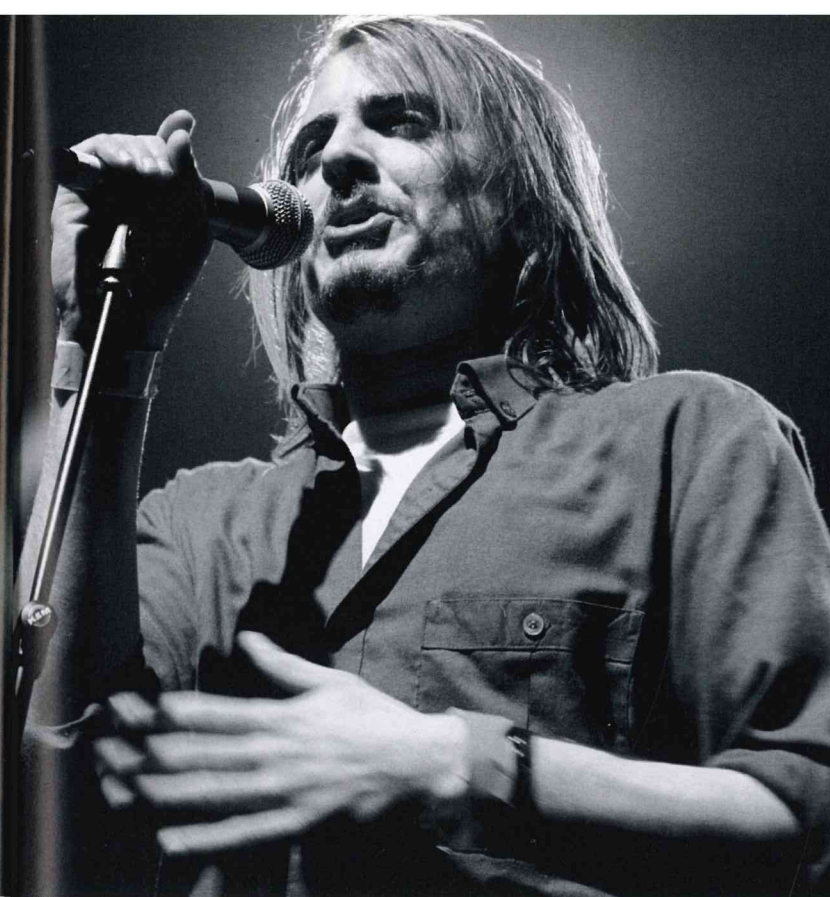
talk about being in this band and it sounded pretty cool. I started going to Vial8 gigs, when they would play places like the Troy Balance Studios, a rehearsal studio with a concrete floor. They were all-ages shows and everyone was friends. It was such an incredible way to get into music. I'd seen stadium shows – my dad took me to James Brown – but then I was at these punk rock shows where the room was crammed and the energy was absolutely mind blowing. People really loved Vial8. That really set a point for me of what I wanted to do. Joe would go on tour with H-Block 101. They called him a guitar tech, but really he was just someone to have along for fun – he didn't even know how to tune a guitar. He used to rock up at gigs with a toolbox to show how professional he was, but it only had a single screwdriver inside. Karl [Mautner] from H-Block would break a string, and he'd be calling out to Joe at the side of stage, 'Joe, come and change my fucking string!' He was totally useless. I went and saw H-Block support The Offspring, which was a big show, although I just went to see H-Block, and the next day I saw Joe on the bus and he'd been on that tour and I said how it must have been awesome fun and he's like, 'Yeah, it was sweet, there was heaps of chocolate cake backstage!' All he could talk about was the food. I was thinking to myself, 'This guy is weird.' Plus he had an acoustic guitar with him and he was jamming on the

bus to Box Hill. He was like, 'Do you want to come over to my place to smoke weed?' and I said sure. He lived in a place called The Rat Lounge, this house above a drink factory. He'd have gigs in his kitchen. That was the first place The Spazzys ever played. He'd have good hardcore bands and everything. I was completely out of place at the time. Those guys were all punks and I studied music and I liked sixties-inspired rock and soul music. But they opened me up to all this amazing music at the time – I saw a Fugazi DVD at The Rat Lounge and my brain just went boooom. I was playing in another band with Dallas called Red Clover, a faux-hardcore band that played weird instruments, and after we played in the kitchen Joe was like, 'I'm going to make you boys stars!' He'd put on these crazy sunglasses and pretend he was our bigshot rock manager. It was such a fun time – gigs in the kitchen and hanging out all night. There wasn't that focus on studying like at the high school I'd gone to, instead it was, 'Let's go to the supermarket and steal stuff!'"

And Then There Were Four

JOE: "We had a couple of people that we'd do covers with, but we couldn't even get someone to turn up. Dallas, Indra and I been trying to get someone to fit in as drummer

for six months and that day we decided it would be my older brother Simon. He didn't really play drums properly – we had to teach him. He used to play, we'd jam on The Ramones as teenagers, but he had to get it back. If nothing else we figured Simon would always turn up. We had a house in East Brunswick that was called The Rat Lounge. We'd always play there, but eventually we got evicted. [Simon] and I had got home the night before and we were bashing away and making noise and I knew that he and Indra got on pretty well, so teaching him to play wasn't that difficult when the personalities worked so well together. Dallas and Indra could already play drums, so that was a help as well. I can't remember the rehearsal itself that well – maybe we did 'Stale Thoughts' – but I remember them going out all excited. I was too tired and stressed out. I stayed home thinking to myself, 'I can't believe I've got my brother in my band!' But it worked out well. I was previously in a band called Vial8 with my younger brother, Tom, and the brother thing creates some stress but overall we're a tight family and Dallas and Indra had gone to school with Tom, so sometimes it feels like the band is really just our extended family. When they all went out it was the night that Brazil won the World Cup and they got caught up in street activity. Ever since, I've gauged where the band is via the World Cup – whenever people ask how long we've been



around that's how I remember it's four years. For the World Cup this year we went and watched it in a café. Nothing big happened this World Cup for us."

Strangers in a Strange Land

JOE: "We went to Austin for South by Southwest [SXSW] in February of 2004 and then did some stuff in New York and some stuff in London. I'd never been outside Australia before. We applied for SXSW and got accepted for it. We couldn't really afford it – a week and a half before we were due to go I still hadn't fully paid for my ticket. I wasn't that stressed, I just figured it would work itself out. My parents eventually said that they'd go guarantor on a credit card so I could pay for it if I'd come back and work off the bill. I got the card and it helped us have a great time, but we had different priorities when we got back because we had to make [the second EP]. I didn't know what to expect with SXSW, but the main thing for me was that Toots & The Maytals were playing. That made it all worth it to me. We just did a few shows, we weren't fully touring. And we had a credit card. I still haven't paid back anything on mine since, which might scare some people but it depends on how you look at it. For that two months we were completely outside the

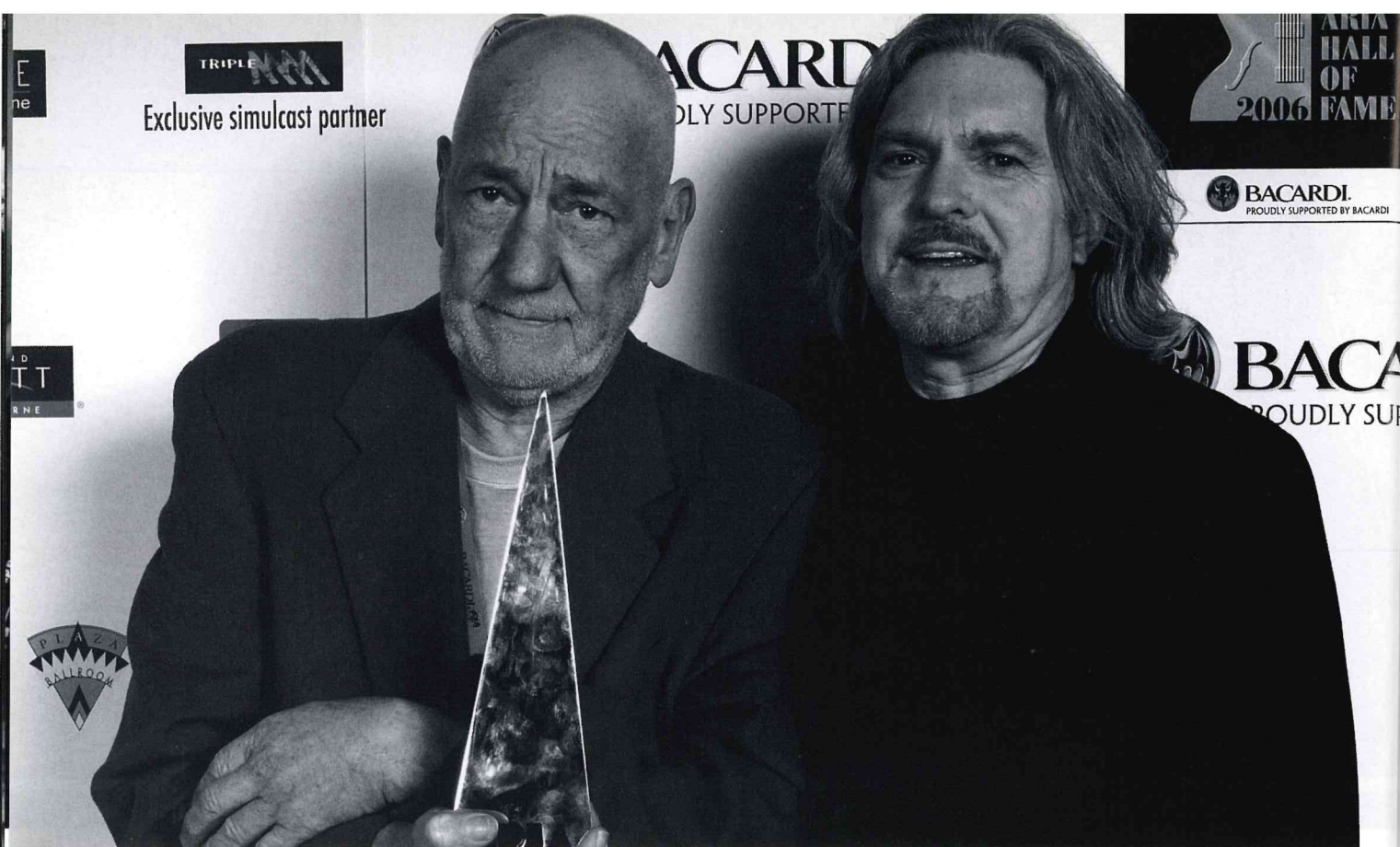
world we'd grown up in and known around Melbourne. Suddenly you'd be stumbling across stuff like Joe Strummer murals in New York. Sometimes I didn't even know what to do, so I'd stay inside and watch *Seinfeld* and *Law & Order* because I was in the city they were set. We stayed with our cousins in London as well as people Simon had known when he lived there. We didn't do a heap of shows, but the big thing was coming back and appreciating life here."

Partners in Rhyme

INDRA: We'd all vaguely met Macromantics and Woody was talking her up, but the first time we actually saw Romy [Hoffman] play was at SXSW – it's a long way to go to see a local act, hey? She was from Sydney, but at SXSW we were billeted together in Austin with these people and there was this really amazing lady living next door, late fifties or something, and she was really cool and relaxed in the way Austin people are. She'd literally talk to us over the fence, so we invited her down to a showcase both of us were doing and she came and saw us both and afterwards she was like, 'You should all do a song together', and we were all smiling politely and thinking how crazy that was. We never would have thought of that. I was into hip-hop then – we weren't listening to it.

But for the rest of that trip we kept thinking about doing something and we realised that we were on really similar levels. She was listening to a lot of punk rock when we started checking out hip-hop. Romy was full-on – a very strong girl. In Austin, she jumped up in front of 20 people and just belted out every song. It was really good. We had a couple of years between the second EP and now, when we've got the album out, and we weren't playing many gigs and I'm sure some people thought we had fizzled out, but Romy was really optimistic the whole time. She'd tell us how much she loved us and insist that we had to do a track together. We had a bassline and some guitar, but we really wrote 'Coming In From All Angles' around her. We got the groove and then we went and demoed it at Joe's house and she was sitting outside the room with a notepad and scribbling it down on the page and when we had the track down she just shot it all out. I'm sure people think it's a weird thing for us to do. I've gone onto internet forums and people will write stuff like, 'I really like Ground Components, but Macromantics is hip-hop and I don't like hip-hop', but we're hoping to do a whole tour with her in January, and maybe we'll eventually do an album together."

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Turn It Up

Lobby Loyde did it first and he did it loudest

Story by Troy D. Colvin

Photos by Marty Philbey (ARIA only)

In August, when he was offered belated recognition at the age of 65 and inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame, Lobby Loyde was too ill to speak, but he still managed to strap on a guitar to play. That's a fitting reflection of a life spent playing music since the early 1960s, a career that includes R&B outfit the Purple Hearts, psychedelic combo the Wild Cherries, a key role in the Aztecs alongside Billy Thorpe, fronting the Coloured Balls, and a stint in London as a solo artist during the punk years followed by a return to Australia and an influential presence as a producer. Several days after the black-tie

event, Loyde, who is in the final stages of lung cancer, did speak, addressing everything from his professional beginnings to his own mortality. Rose Tattoo's Angry Anderson, whose band was inaugurated alongside Loyde, said of him that night, "More than anyone else, Lobby helped create the Australian guitar sound. Long before Angus [Young] or Billy Thorpe or the Angels or Rose Tattoo. Lobby inspired Australian bands to step forward and play as loud and aggressively as they could. People are still trying to copy it today."

Was being inducted into the Hall of Fame a milestone for you?

Let's just say that I would have thought I'd be the last guy to ever get a gong. And, being a pessimist, I'd say if I wasn't terminally ill I wouldn't [laughs]. I think my friends lobbied the hell outta the Hall of Fame. But you've still gotta get the votes to get up there so they must have done a good job.

In his speech, Billy Thorpe praised you for your originality and influence. I know he's your friend, but how did that feel?

Well, he didn't have a weep, so that was the best part. He was a bit emotional up there, and he was prone to saying nice stuff. We're probably better known outside of Australia than we are in Australia. My generation of guys – Rose Tattoo and those sort of bands – we've got a fairly good reputation outside of Australia because we were unrelenting and fairly hardcore. It's a small market in Australia, so you're not actually doing it for success because, let's face it, if you were you'd be a long time waiting. I went to England in the middle of the seventies and I was there just in time for the punk revolution. I used to hear [the Saints'] "Stranded" on the BBC and it was the most intense bit of music coming off the radio. The only band that got anywhere near the Saints was the [Sex] Pistols and the Clash. They were great, those two bands.

What were they like?

Intense. But we were playing with Southern Electric, so we were playing to the older, sophisticated audience. We were playing intensely bizarre music.

You went to England frustrated with the Australian music scene?

We went there because Virgin were going to release *Obscuration*. The problem was the Australian record company that recorded it, Rainbird, had chosen to dump the company into receivership, do a big tax write-off and save a lot of money. So we whistled dixie for the material. In fact, some of the material was found at the dump. So, after receivership, we obviously got dumped at the tip. That's what you do with good old Australian music – I mean, who keeps it around?

Southern Electric was opening for bands like Ultravox in England?

Yeah, we opened for Ultravox once. That was quite a shock for Ultravox, I'm sure. I actually gave the guitarist from Ultravox [Steve Shears] my pedal board, because he had a terrible bloody guitar sound. I showed him a few things. Initially, Ultravox were quite an intense band, with the original singer [John Foxx] they had a much more challenging sound. Midge [Ure], of course, came along and had the [mimes operatic voice]. From that day onwards it was hits. And I don't think he quite got the message. I thought it was one of those fatal errors whereby you become famous despite yourself. That's not good for you. It's kinda like you replace John Lydon in the Sex Pistols and you put in some other guy who [sings *God Save the Queen* in an operatic style]. And everybody goes wow! Thank God that never happened, but if that did you could've understood why the compromise is made.

Because you get so much acid from the record companies; everyone else says you're good, but they're not seeing the figures on paper. So you better get some figures on paper, brother.

You were live-mixing Doll by Doll in England as well.

Ah, great band. [I remember] mixing at a pub in the East End and the only person that didn't get hurt was me. I'm right in the middle of the room. Some cosmic signal happened, and it's out with the pool cues and the pool balls, it was on for young and old. The police stood at the door and waited for the brawl to finish, and then they arrested everybody, as you would. The band and me were expunged from this whole thing. It was like we were in the third dimension; the whole brawl went on around us. That was an experience; it was mix-on regardless, the band played on. And I think they played fantastic music for an incredible all-in brawl.

What effect did being amongst this energy have on you musically?

The missing element in Australia was the intensity in the audience, because we had the intensity in the bands, but it'd never translated into the audience. The new wave audience was intense, I mean, they were there for the music; believe me, they were there because they loved those bands. When Clash played, or when the Pistols played there was an intensity in the crowd that was unbelievable. Even with higher bands, like Devo and, most importantly, Pere Ubu. The keyboard player had car-crashes, breaking glass, gunshots, God knows what on his keyboard. The guitarist only had three strings on his guitar – B-52 style – because he was only using it to drive sound, and the bass player was from Hell. When they came onstage, the whole night just went whoosh, an hour and a half turned into three seconds – I absorbed every note, it was just awesome.

You were inspired by all this energetic punk music, but your next project was Live With Dubs, this rock fusion thing: Anti-punk. Why?

Because in my age group, that's what we played. We could actually play to the punk audience and not get booed off.

Just because you were so tough and hard?

Tough and hard, yeah. We used to play at the Roundhouse, the Camden Loft, the Marquee, and places like that. And we could play that kind of music because of the intensity, and because of the fact that you could *chew* the music – it was chewy-thick. They loved us. So we actually got on with that generation of

people even though we were old farts. The lyrics were much more new-wave than anyone actually gave them credit for. You write music for the times, and it was psychedelic and intense. That's kinda what *Live With Dubs* was about, that intensity of Times Square and the West End of London. It didn't relate to the audience quite frankly. And nobody bought it – no one gave a damn. It was fair enough and, y'know, the lead singer in our band [Chris 'Mandu' Moraitis] *was* crazy as a loon and *did* go nuts, it was just how it was.

The Coloured Balls were branded by the Australian media as anti-social misfits. Fair?

Well, they were quite intense. I mean, anything that's intense, anything that challenges the norm will always get a bollixing in Australia. We're quite a conservative bunch of people in a very conservative country. People talk about the Yanks being conservative. We're the absolute outright winners in the conservative stakes; you can't get any straighter than the Aussie outlook. We see ourselves as big, inner-city, trendy, dazzling urbanites and actually we're not. We're hokey and we're quite dangerous. Mate, don't fall afoul of the Aussie battle-axe because you're a dead man. Coloured Balls had an intense audience.

The Sharpies?

That's it, the Sharpies. They liked that kind of music, they listened to it, they got off more to *Human Being* and *G.O.D.* than they got off to any of the other stuff. It was a media beat-up, everybody went along and said, 'violent crowd'. Three guys had a fight out of a thousand. I've seen worse at the boxing.

What was the Australian music landscape like in the sixties and seventies? Was it really just boring, stagnant pop?

Yep, it was.

Was it difficult for you to operate in that environment?

We operated in the rhythm and blues area. And the harder rock area, so we were okay. But only because we had an inner-city fanbase of people. We had that disenfranchised youth from the Polytechnics, the Universities and High School who were listening to music that was intensely Chicago, or intensely London, or intensely New York, and so we put it together. But the rest of the music was bloody sissy pop. The worst elements of pop. It wasn't even good pop, it wasn't even well written, it wasn't even well performed. It was pop for the sake of pop because that's how you got a crowd – basically cover bands. Along

"And y'know, I'll probably drop dead live on stage, hopefully. That'd be fantastic."

comes the Beatles, so 25 Melbourne bands all sound like the Beatles, I mean, what the hell? Along come the Rolling Stones – 25 bands sound just like the Rolling Stones. But we never went that way, we went another way.

What made you so aware and driven to be original?

Well, my old man was a muso. He played in an 18-piece jazz band. And he used to be always on my case about [playing] sissy rock n roll instead of playing genuine blues and R&B. He took me to a building site once – he was a builder – and he walked out on the girder, five floors up. I had to crawl on my hands and knees. He said, "You're not going to be a builder, are you, mate?" and I said, "I'm terrified up here." I had a phobia of heights and I couldn't take it. And, the very day I was there, some guy fired a ramset and it went straight through the girder and stuck in this guy's helmet, and he dropped four floors to his doom. If the bolt in the head didn't kill him, the fall killed him, believe me – he was dead as a maggot. And that was it for me, that was my last day ever on a building site. No health and safety in those days, mate. The union would be unimpressed, I believe.

Why did you leave the Aztecs in 1970?

Thorpe and I have known one another since we were kids. Him and Barry Gibb [the Bee Gees] and I were the louts of the Brisbane music scene. Gibby was the pop star, Thorpe was the energetic guy, and I was the kinda weird alternate guy. I'd known Bill a lot, but I was writing Coloured Balls music and that and the Aztecs were different. I had to go and find guys that could play that stuff because that's where I wanted to go. The Aztecs were great to play in, an energetic band, but, without being rude, it was pub rock.

Thorpe has credited you as giving the Aztecs their harder, more driving edge.

Well he did *Over the Rainbow* and *I Told the Brook*, and he was wearing powder blue suits and driving an Aston-Martin. When he came to Melbourne they were actually on their way to England. We had a jam, and so for a couple of years I played in the Aztecs. It was good for him and good for me, because I realised where I wanted to go. From the Wild Cherries to the Aztecs is a strange deviation, the Wild Cherries were quite psychedelic. We'd play a piece of music 20-minutes long

and were really bizarre and bent, but in those days they never recorded that kinda stuff. When they [the record company] came to listen to us, we had four ten-minute songs and two twenty-minute songs. They went, "that doesn't work". With the Aztecs we made *The Hoax Is Over*, and in listening to it I kind of thought: not intense enough for me. I wanted to go somewhere more intense. Coloured Balls music was in my head – I was writing things like 'Human Being' and all that sort of stuff, so I had to go somewhere and the only guys I could find to play it were young guys. The guys from my generation didn't want to know about it.

The Aztecs audience would yell, "Suck more piss!" What was that about?

They were holding up pots. Some idiot decided that the drinking age should be lowered from 21 to 18 and [pub hours] should at the same time go from six o'clock to 10 o'clock at night. So you had this massive generation of guys who could now get a beer and drive – there was no breath test law. "Suck more piss" was like [giving the finger]. It's actually not what people think it is. It was: now that we're eighteen and we're pissed, we're going to drive home. And you think whoa, brother. Consequently a lot of people wiped themselves out in those days. We used to come upon the most horrific crashes going home from the gig.

Did you introduce Billy Thorpe to LSD?

That's not true. What happened was a psychiatrist did, a mate of ours, Stanley Gold. He said, "You guys are into psychedelic drugs, you ever tried LSD?" And he had Sandoz liquid, the real thing. And that was fan-fucking-tastic. That was intense. Well, after that I was writing things like 'G.O.D.' and shit.

That set you up for the Coloured Balls.

That completely destroyed my Aztec lifestyle because I could no longer turn a blind eye to the audience and to the music. I know that sounds rude, but I was turning a blind eye to it because I was drinking a bit, smoked a lot of pot. It was fun being on stage, it was a great band to walk on stage with because it rocked like hell, it was as loud as buggery, and it was intense. But I was missing the Wild Cherries. See, the Wild Cherries, we were taking a little bit of LSD and smoking a bit of pot and we

were quite a psychedelic band. The Aztecs was a hiatus from that. The Aztecs smoked a bit of pot, but they drank a lot of booze. A bottle of Scotch every night, y'know. That's a lifestyle, you get used to that one pretty quickly because it's like a pair of comfortable slippers – you slip 'em on and off you go. It's just bad for you.

You've never been dependant on drugs?

No. I've got an anti-addictive personality; I'm one of those sort of guys – I can walk away from things. I can walk away from bands. I've always had this ability to walk away. I dunno what it is, but if it bores me that's it. I've had a lot of friends who were addicted to heroin, amphetamines, cocaine, and they always say, "What's your story, it's take it or leave it with you?" If I felt like it I would, but if I didn't feel like it I wouldn't and that's actually weird for people – they can't quite cope with that. My psychologist said, "That's what's keeping you alive now with your cancer, because you turn your back on it, and you walk away from it." And it's true. I'm living till the end because that's just how I am. And y'know, I'll probably drop dead live on stage, hopefully. That'd be fantastic.

That would be your ideal way to go?

Bloody oath. Rather than in a bed gibbering. I mean, Christ, I saw what happened to me when I had a fit, and ended up in hospital for a week and a half. I woke up with this black chick with dreads. She said, "I'm your interpreter." I said, "Yeah?" She said when you came to hospital you said you only understood Swahili and Greek. I said "No, I said to the ambulance driver, 'Everything you're saying sounds like Swahili and Greek'." She said, "Well I'm Swahili, this is a good gig, so don't blow it." I really don't want to go to a gibbering end on the life-support machine. I said to my daughter, who's got my power of attorney, "The minute I'm dependent on boxes, tubes, and devices, turn the lot off." And she will.

Have you come to terms with your mortality?

God, yeah.

Is it something you've always had figured out?

Well, that's my anti-addictive personality. I mean, life's an intense drug; it's the most pleasurable drug of all. Life's something you

get really high on, but the fact that we all die sooner or later is one of those intense facts of life. What's the biggest luxury in life? You're not wondering if someone's going to shoot you or someone's going to stab you to death; you actually know that in x amount of time you'll go [clicks fingers] – that's bloody good, isn't it?

But you don't know when.

You don't know when, but you've got a rough itinerary. Well, most people don't. A lot of people live till they're 93 and they're dribbling on themselves, and they're full of tubes and everyone's patting 'em on the head and the Alzheimer's is so profoundly into them they don't even know who's talking to them. I don't want to be there. It's just not me. I'd rather know that just around the corner's the brick wall and I'm going to slam into it, I'd rather know that, because it's kinda intensely interesting. Y'know people who drown and come back? They all talk about the same thing, about white light, blah, blah, blah. Which is when you stop breathing and your eyes stop working. Once your brain cells are wasting money on your vision you see white light because your eyes are now turned off. If that's the worst that we're going to run into, if all you've got to cope with is dysfunction and the doorway out – sounds pretty good to me.

Do you believe in God, or a higher power?

I'm spiritual. I'm intensely spiritual. I've got a feeling about everything, y'know what I mean? It's an intense place, the world; the universe is an intense place, [it's] so complex. It really is a giant molecule, all those little atoms of solar systems everywhere. If you look at that peripheral power, it's pretty phenomenal shit. It's pretty hard to dismiss that. I mean, it's very spiritual stuff. But actually giving you the name's pretty hard. If I was having a soft spot for anyone, I'd be having it for the Buddhists because of their logical clarity. But even then, there's still too much name stuff in there.

How would you like to be remembered?

As being fairly okay with making records for young guys. I think I've [produced] better records than I've ever made myself. Not that I make a lot.

Have you got a favourite?

Aspirations by X would be my first favourite. *The Sunnyboys*, the first *Machinations* [Esteem], some of the stuff I did with *Olympic Sideburns*. I'm doing stuff all the time with young bands; I just like the young bands. I love the *Painters and Dockers* stuff, I liked 'Kill Kill Kill' – that was fantastic.

It was just fun to make those records even though you probably don't know I produced those because I think I'm Cyril Corsworth, sometimes I'm Fred Faulty, I'm all these different people on records.

And your real name is John. How did Lobby Loyde come about?

Because I'm an intense bastard and I talk hard at people, I'm a lobbyist. Bob Dames [bass player with the Purple Hearts] started calling me Lobby because I would lobby the fuck out of people. And he reckoned that I was the most intense prick he'd ever met. My last name's L-y-d-e, so he put the 'o' in because it rhymed better. Lobby Loyde, not Lobby Lyde. As a lobbyist you can't be lying, you've got to be believable.

I heard you changed your name because you were running from the tax department and speaker suppliers.

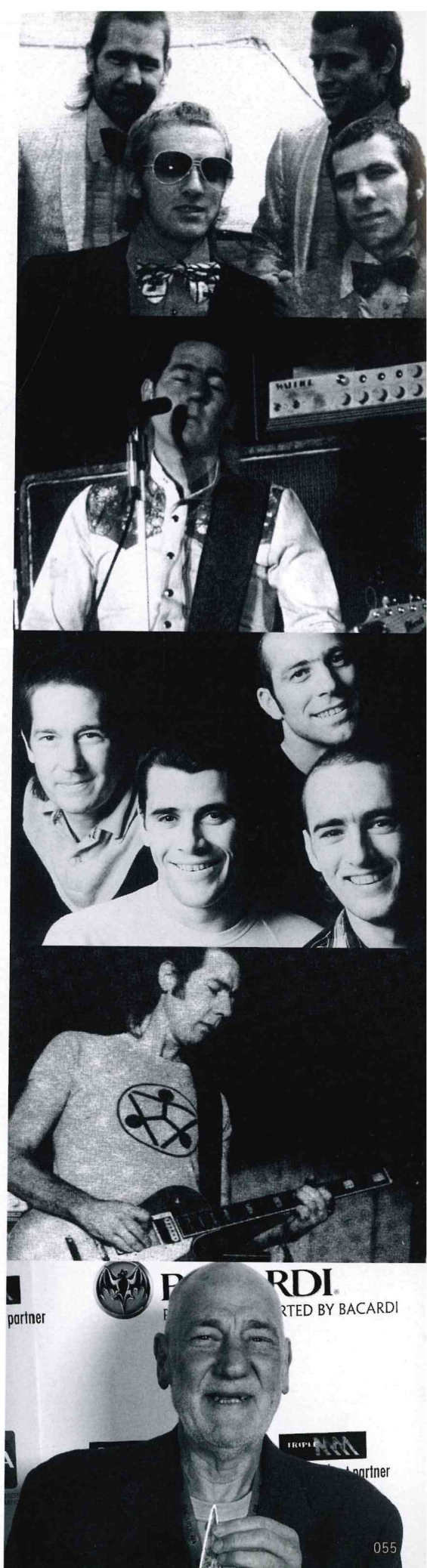
Nah, bullshit. You couldn't run from the tax department, they know your imprint. It had nothing to do with the tax department. It had nothing to do with speaker companies; I've never paid for a speaker in my friggin' life, by the way.

But you were fond of blowing them up.

Yes! The speaker guys used to see me as a challenge: "If Lobby can't blow up your friggin' speakers, they must be okay". In the end I was using 32 12's and 16 15's. If you had my amp today it would cost you \$70,000 dollars. The bastard thing used to put out 1000 watts RMS, it was a serious amp; you could have cooked eggs on the transfer, which weighed 75 kilos. But the tax department didn't want to even know me. I've never made enough money for them to chase me, quite frankly. The tax department called me in once for an interview, they asked me how much I earned. I told them and they all laughed amongst themselves and let me go. They thought that was really amusing, that someone could live on that. They had a whole different vision of the music industry after talking to me. They said, "We thought you guys were doing alright, we didn't realise you were living in poverty!" When they get my tax form there's nothing to read in there, mate. I'm a fuckin' pensioner for Christ's sake. I've never made any money out of music, ever.

Even now?

Nup, never made any money. [Michael] Gudinski paid me royalties for the *Sunnyboys* and *Machinations*. But I mean, X never gave me a fuckin' copy of the album, if you don't mind. I had to ask 'em for one.



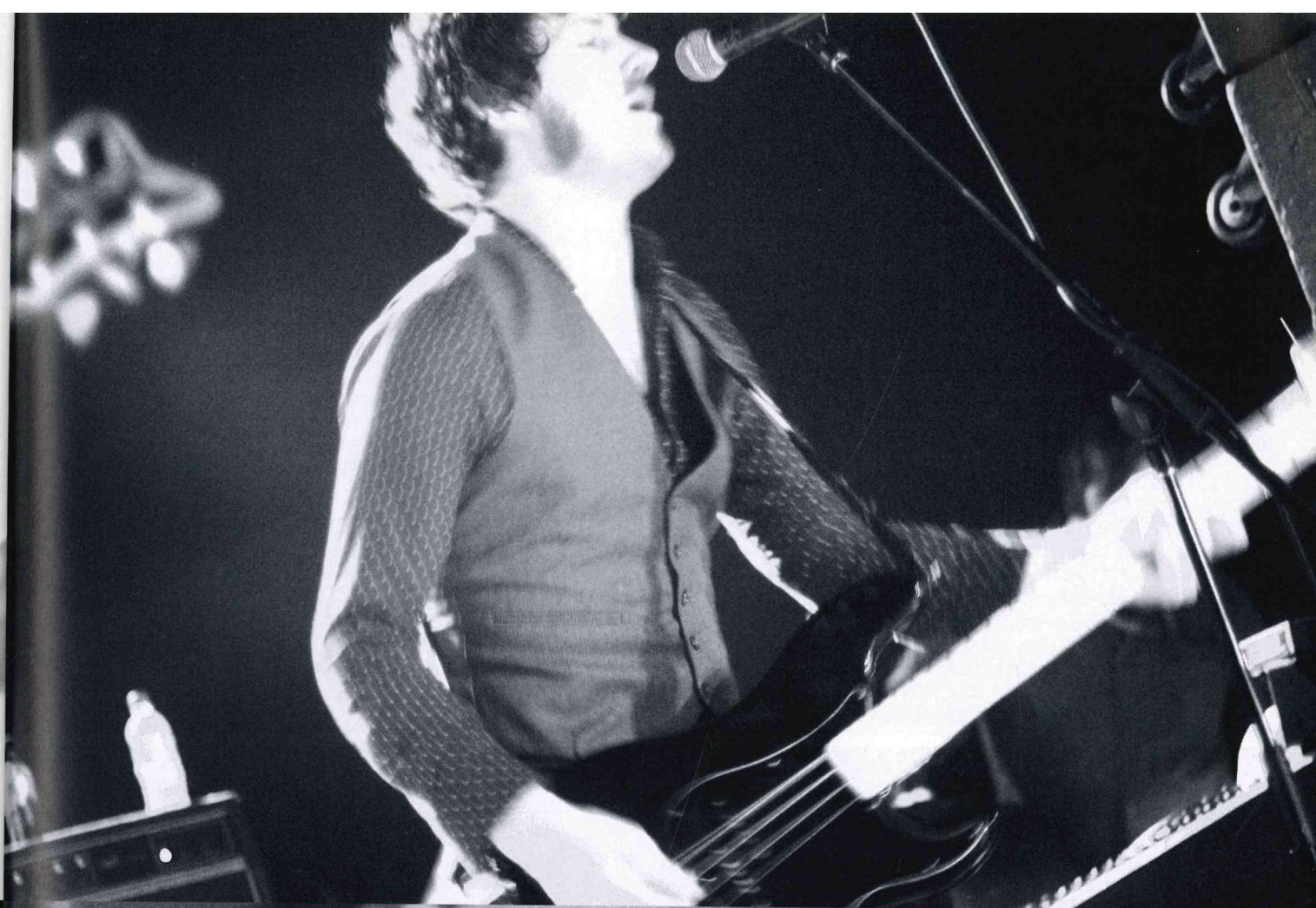


Start Me Up

**Dallas Crane at
Sydney's Gaelic Club:
for one night only**

**Photos by Peter Ottery
Text by Pat Bourke**

Playing a large portion of new songs to a full house was always going to be a challenge, but put George Young in the audience, and the desire to impress became firmly lodged in the back of my pre-show mental state. I attempted to shut it out with beers, consumed hungrily, and in quick succession, but before they took the desired effect, I was in my stage-left position. I could see his well-dressed figure looking down at us from the balcony as we kicked into a song no one in the room had heard, and we had not yet played to an audience. I lost myself in the volume and intensity of the show, started enjoying myself, and before I could get another chance to worry, it was over. We performed most of our forthcoming record (*Factory Girls*), and some old favourites, to a very responsive audience that night, and when George entered the band room with a friendly smile and congratulated us on a great show, I sunk comfortably into my seat and swigged on a cold beer, rather pleased with our first show of many to come.



Lords of the Ring

Meet Eddie Current Suppression Ring

Story by Tim Scott
Photos by Ben Butcher

Eddy Current Suppression Ring are the shit. Like a roadside IED just waiting to blow the paint off the hype-Humvee, their brand of proto-punk doesn't pretend to be anything that it ain't. Just good old-time Aussie rock, sans the gimmicks. Well, maybe the gloves that singer Brendan wears could be considered a little 'gimmicky', but the point being is that their sound is like the Saints or Wire in their prime coupled with the melody of the Easybeats. It ain't pretty, but you can dance and drink to it, and, when walking out of the pub later, you can slap your buddies on the back and slur, "Man that was fucking awesome, can you spot me five bucks for their picture disc?" These kids don't muck around. Here's what your man Eddy (the bloke on g'tar and keys) has to say.

For some reason, when I think of the name 'Eddy Current Suppression Ring' I think of 'Dean', the mustache from The Curiosity Show. Who, in turn, makes me think of the mustache that works at Eagle Leather who sells Current Suppression Rings out back. Any connection?

No connection, but, funnily enough, last time we drove to Sydney there was a big billboard of Dr Karl, the scientist, and Brendan looked at it and flipped because for the last few years, every time he heard Dr Karl, he thought it was the mustachioed dude from *The Curiosity Show*. I like Dean.

So you're down with the hipsters at Shake Some Action. Is that place always full of hot chicks?

I'm not sure if we are down with the hipsters. We have brought our own friends when we have played. I liked playing there because it's a good room and I can walk home, but last time we played there, all our friends were told it was a uni night and they were deemed not young, rich or hot enough to come in by the charming bouncers. Danny got stopped and hassled and he was carrying a freakin' snare drum. To answer the question though, yes all the chicks are hot.

So my good friend Dave Lang over there at Lexicon Devil blog and who is quite possibly the most crotchety, "if it wasn't released on SST pre-1986 or isn't some head warping free jazz please spare me the bullshit" music fan I know,

raves about you. How do you explain your music appealing to BOTH hot young girls at Shake Some Action and a dude who, in the past, has considered fire bombing that place?

Maybe the hot young girls that like us are also crotchety free jazz fans.

On the You Tube video of you guys playing at Revolver, I noticed that you have a nice pair of milk crates sitting on stage. How important are milk crates to a rock and roll band?

I'm not a fan of keyboard stands, so I find using milk crates diverts attention away from my rather un-rock and roll looking synthesizer. On the weekend, I couldn't find a crate for my amp so I had to tilt it to hear it, and it started smoking and sounding funny. So, no milk crates = amp death.

And your favourite onstage dance move?

Brendan doesn't have favourites, he just likes to move, on time, all the time. Well, out of time a bit. He sure has his own rhythm.

I like how the spoken-word type vocals on 'Precious Rose' sound like the Cosmic Psycho's Knighty on 'Custom Credit'. People speak of your very Australian delivery both vocally and musically. Was this a conscious decision when you first started?

Surely not sounding Australian would be more of a conscious decision. Vocally, I can hear the Aussieness; musically, I have no idea what sounds Australian. Our amps were made in Melbourne, that's gotta be it.

Even though there is a definite punk edge to the band, you don't sit in any one of the Melbourne punk scenes; you are able to play with a band such as Straightjacket Nation as well as support Radio Birdman. How do you explain that?

I don't think the gap between Radio Birdman and Straightjacket Nation is really that big. I think at first we were wondering why these hardcore dudes liked us, but you soon realise just because they are in that sort of band doesn't mean they don't go home and listen to Saints or AC/DC records. Dan from Straightjacket Nation and I only ever talk

about Rod Stewart and 'Total Control' by The Motels these days.

You have released three seven inches. Obviously working at Corduroy helps in that department. Are they all still available?

Corduroy (now Zenith) has definitely been a huge bonus. Not only because I got to make our own records, but also it was a place to practice, record, hang out with ace people and listen to awesome records. All the 7"s are still available but I am coming to the tail end of the covers for all three.

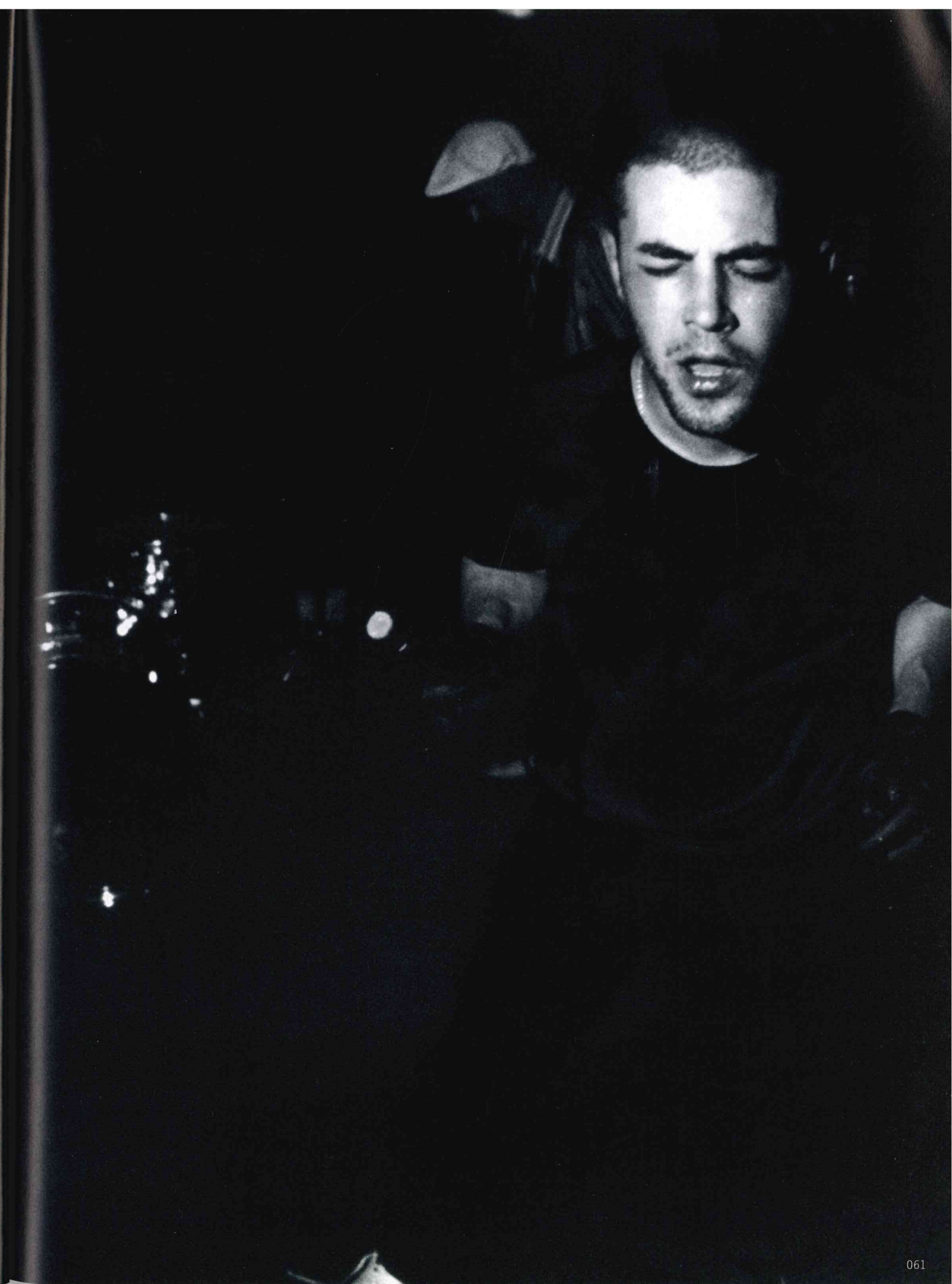
How did the split with Straightjacket Nation come about? I heard they went down to one of your gigs one night to give you a good beating for some reason. Was there a beat down?

True. Corduroy owed them some records/money when the whole ship went down. Hearing that some of us in the band worked down there, they came down to our show to do some damage. Maybe because they liked us or maybe because we are obviously mega tough, they behaved nicely. I got them their money back and their records pressed, we ended playing shows together, doing the record and driving to Sydney. The fight has now been rescheduled as an ECSR vs SJN tennis tournament.

Is violence at a rock & roll show ever justifiable?

At only one of our shows has a fight broken out, and it happened to be between Brendan's friends and some of my friends that didn't know each other. One dude was being an obnoxious jerk and things got a bit crazy. It's sort of funny in hindsight as no-one got hurt, but, at the time, it made me feel pretty weird. On the plus side, our friend Benno won some cash at a photography comp with a photo of the rumble, so at least something good came from it. As for any rock & roll show? I'm sure there are times when violence is justified, but it ain't my cup of tea. Oh, Brendan slapped me once during a show and also hit my keyboard repeatedly with his mic and broke both. That was pretty violent.

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Bubble Boys

Or, Exhibit A in the case of Tucker B's and the Wolfmother national tour

Story by Andrew Houston

Photos by Robert Fletcher (main shot) and Neil Wallace

So the little Caboose known to yr mummy and daddy bentest as the "Tucker B's" hit the road for a few lily shows with a lily bandy called Wolfmother. Also along for this freak show of a fortnight are Dungen (((prolapsed: Doooooon-yem)))) from Swaziland. Via our web site, here is what some of Australia's finest young butterbeans were kind enough to write of our efforts:

"no word comes even close to describing u try hard faggots and your shit geneless gaylord 'noise' go die in a hole."

"your music is retarded! u other people are probly emos so no give a shit about u guys FUCK UP! now the tucker bs lol what fuck ups u guys looked cool at challange stadium in ya HK metal looking dress, then u play the queerst ass fucking 'noise' ive ever heard."

"tucker b's are very EMOTIONAL."

"You permanently damaged my friends eyesight with your lasers last night (Wolfmother, Brisbane). Fortunately for her she didnt have to watch you wearing leather skirts and capes during your set. I was considering destroyng my ears so I didnt have to hear."

"you don't deserver your motherfucking genitals. they will rot along with your stinking taste in music."

"Honestly the worst band I have ever seen."

"god u guys sucked bad."

"you killed wolfmother go play in traffic."

"yeh... you guys were pretty good with wolfmother last night... but you need to get clearer lyrics! some catchy lines like 'JOKER AND THE THIEF IN THE NIGHT!'"

"u guys are fucking retarded if u call that music there's no gene to it wtf is with sticking laser lights 2 ya foreheads anyway"

"im goin to cut your cocks off so that i can stop your seed from spreading i will never stop untill i make sure that your music is completely destroyed in every aspect."

"Your music is the strangest shit ive ever seen and ive seen some crazy shit. WTF is up with the red lasers on your heads?"

So we were asked by our girl/fences in Wolfmother if we wanted to open the shows on their Oozier album launch tore. We checked if they had asked the right bandy, they were sure they had, and so we said 'YEAH'. We sent through our standard rider request:

- 1 carton of Coopers Green
- 1 bottle of vodka
- 1 bottle of whiskey
- 1 carton of Red Bull
- No water.

We got it all too, Walter; clearly this was not going to be our normal *kicking the can and who's a FATHEAD today?* routine around the country.

Personnel:

Matt Maguire – The Reactor

Matt Rudas – Ticky Touchwood

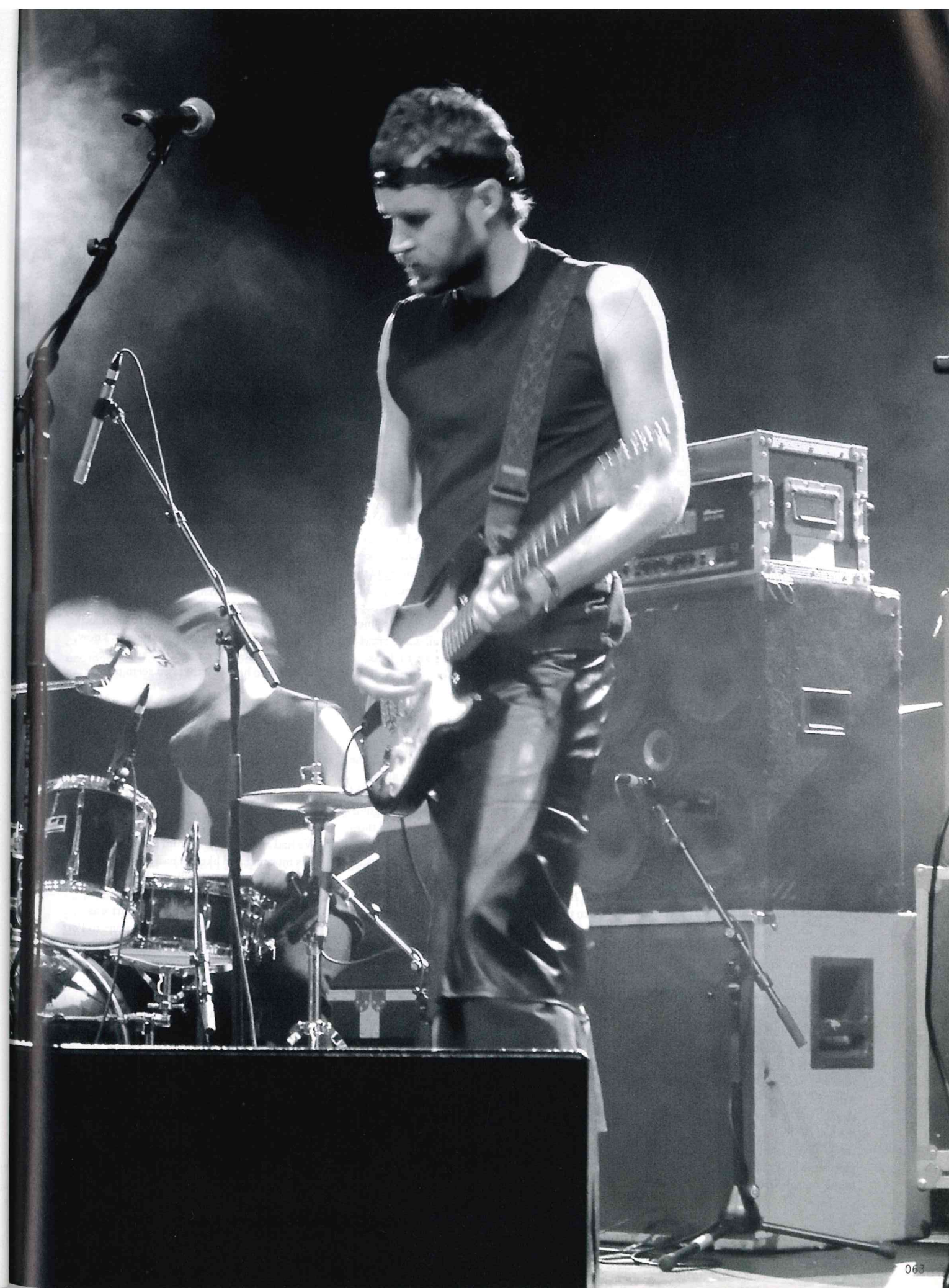
Darren Nuttall – The Hush

Andrew Houston – Nigel Neck-Tie.

The Lade, Day 1 The Thebarton Theatre

After about 2435 hours of practicing and staring into the impending broken dream doom of opening for the Wolvers, we are about ready to sniff the fever of opening band stadium rock. We are flying down to the Lade, which is nice as we normally lose one member of the band to pyhsck-hosis (lala) when we drive to that fine Blister of the South. We meet Dimples, our soundman, at the Acaridae Airport and go to check in to our hotel to catch up, hold hands, gather our nerves and ensure that we continue to be Eggheads, no matter what happens on this tour. Should be easy.

We have so many questions about how things might work on a tour like this; we throw them at Dimples as he has been on a few big tours in the Auckland/South Oz regional area. Turns out he is not going to shed too much light on our dark-skulls: Good boy, Dimples.



We call an Ader-Ladey taxicab, brush all our teef up, spit in our hair, lick our cheeks and head down to the “Thebby” (as the local knobbies call it).

The Thermo is a lovely old theatre. We look for the Wolfmother trucks (there are 14 on this tour). We find them; big shiny and Bright-Wight, all of them playing “Woman” from the speakers that sit like spears on the top of them. Our gear has come down on the trucks so we only have our guitars and handbags, which is a cheap, but easy thrill. We walk up to a member of the Theatric Security Company and gently ask for his assistance to get in. He asks who we are, looking at our guitars. We tell him who we are (Wolfmother). He bows his head and lets us saunter through. We shimmer by in a cloudy mist of magical tucker dust.

We meet Gaylene, who is the tour manager and the big boss we have to be nice to. He gives us all our passes and all his rules. Ticky Touchwood smiles at him and tells him that we will be good boys and won’t cause any trouble and won’t ever be late and will always be in tune and will always finish on time and won’t invite dumb friends backstage and won’t take drugs and won’t get drunk and won’t smoke in dressing rooms and won’t eat the Wolverines food and won’t be too loud. Ticky is a suck-hole but Gaylene does scare the living garlick out of us so we were happy he lied to him.

Each night we have a half hour set and we start at 7.30 (zackly), a half hour after doors open. We have sound-check at 5.00 o’clock everyday. We meet the Dooonyen men, they are really sweet and skinny. We soundcheck and everything is working good and proper, we are nervous and dumb during soundcheck. We retreat back to our dressing room, which is shit hot, complete with Chesterfield lounges, mirrors and lights, a smoke machine, food and booze. We have promised ourselves (me to him and him to me) not to get drunken or drudged on this tour before playing, we manage to do this (tonight) and walk out on stage extremely sober at exczackly 7.30 to about 2000 kiddies and wolfmen fans. Despite our own personal doom-chants, there is an awesome roar as we enter the stage and the lights go up. We play well, but it is a complete blur and each of us has quite a few special moments in terms of our ears being completely filled with motor oil (zzzz). We survived, we can do it better, it was even fun. After we play we eat our din-dins, which is sleazily the best food any of us have eaten in the last twelve years. After desert we watch the Wolves absolutely destroy the place, they play incredibly and are the daddies to the 3500 numb-nuts in attendance.

After the Wolfie set we venture into the Ladey suburbs in search of the worst gutter drugs imaginable. We have conversations and give hundreds of dollars to men who are half ferrets and half tendon. Once we get back in the city we go and check out Dooonyen at a little club, they play for about two hours and are a Swaziland groove machine. Then we roll home in a rather large, shaky bubble.

The Lade, Day 2 The Thebarton Theatre

We faff around during the day, playing badminton and chasey until about 3pm when we head back to the Thebbo. We are a bit more relaxed today, largely because we have been in a magic bubble for the last 17 hours. It’s Faraday night in the Lade, when the big tendons and their 16 and 17-year-old friends come out to play. The second sold out night can only mean that the people who come along tonight are the people who were too lazy to line up for tickets the first time, that is to say: BAD SNIVELLING DOGS who want to TEAR APART INDI-HOMO BANDS WHO DON’T SING “MINDS EYE”. A shivering paranoiack climbs into our Tucker b jumpsuits, nobody else seems aware of the impending doom of this whole evening. The Wolfies, Dooonyeam and their crews set up in the catering room eating lamb, salmon, veal, turkey and jasmine soufflés; we crawl into our dressing room and start to drink, drink, drink. It’s 6.30 and our rider is all drunken up.

We hit the stage ready to knife fight 15 Adlealdiey cops, let alone play half an hour of shady pop songs. Tonight is probably the best we have ever played in leather skirts. However, our Official Tendon Forecast™ is spot on. We get heckled very well tonight by the crowd, they are well lacquered and those who have had their drugs begin to realise they are going to going to run out before the Wolfies take the stage (((Doooooooo))). They deliver their newly found bile and fear to us, we take it like abused wives and engage the odd Ladey flapper in a nice little “*oh that’s a shame Bunny*” routine. Dimples tells us it was a good show. Good boy Dimples. Good boy band. We carry on drinking and set ourselves up in a little hidey hole side of stage and watch Doonyen and the Wolf Finger, they are both great. Wolfmum raze the temperature inside the hall to about 60 degrees. By the end of their rock set myself, Ticky, the Reaktor, Hush, Dimples and the Dragoon men are sitting in our underpants, sweating and drinking and singing along to the skinny guy with the Afro. We carry on after the show, making sure there is no booze left in the whole fuggin palace. We discover Doonyang believe in magic bubbles too.

Millburn, Day 3 Festival Hall

We have got an early start today, off to Melbourne and off to the Forum. We are a bit excited because Dimples tells us this is where The Beatles played when they toured Millburn – turns out it is just a big gym and that Alice in Chains played there too. We spend the day sleeping, eating and cuddling at Marcus from Deloris’sss house (which is a lil’ bit smelly: piss maybe?). Today our moods flippy flaps between spring and autumn. We arrive at the venue at about 4pm, soundcheck and eat and drink.

It is beginning to feel like some sort of strange sport playing to these crowds. The deal is that we buffer ourselves with songs, booze, pharmaceuticals, leather skirts, muscle tops and fantasy (trust us); they decide within the first minute if they like us or if they want to smash our faces in (don’t trust them).

When we head out on stage we are ready to play, Ticky and I tell stories to the crowd; telling them that the show is off, Wolfingerer have broken up, Wolffinger like boys more than girls. They really react well, really relaxed, really refined. Again, we play like fantasy warriors; again, the crowd sprays us with horrible buzzwords. It’s not as bad as it sounds, most people love us and let us know, but it is only ever the twenty or so hockey players who hate you that you seem to hear...

Perf, Day 4 Challenge Stadium

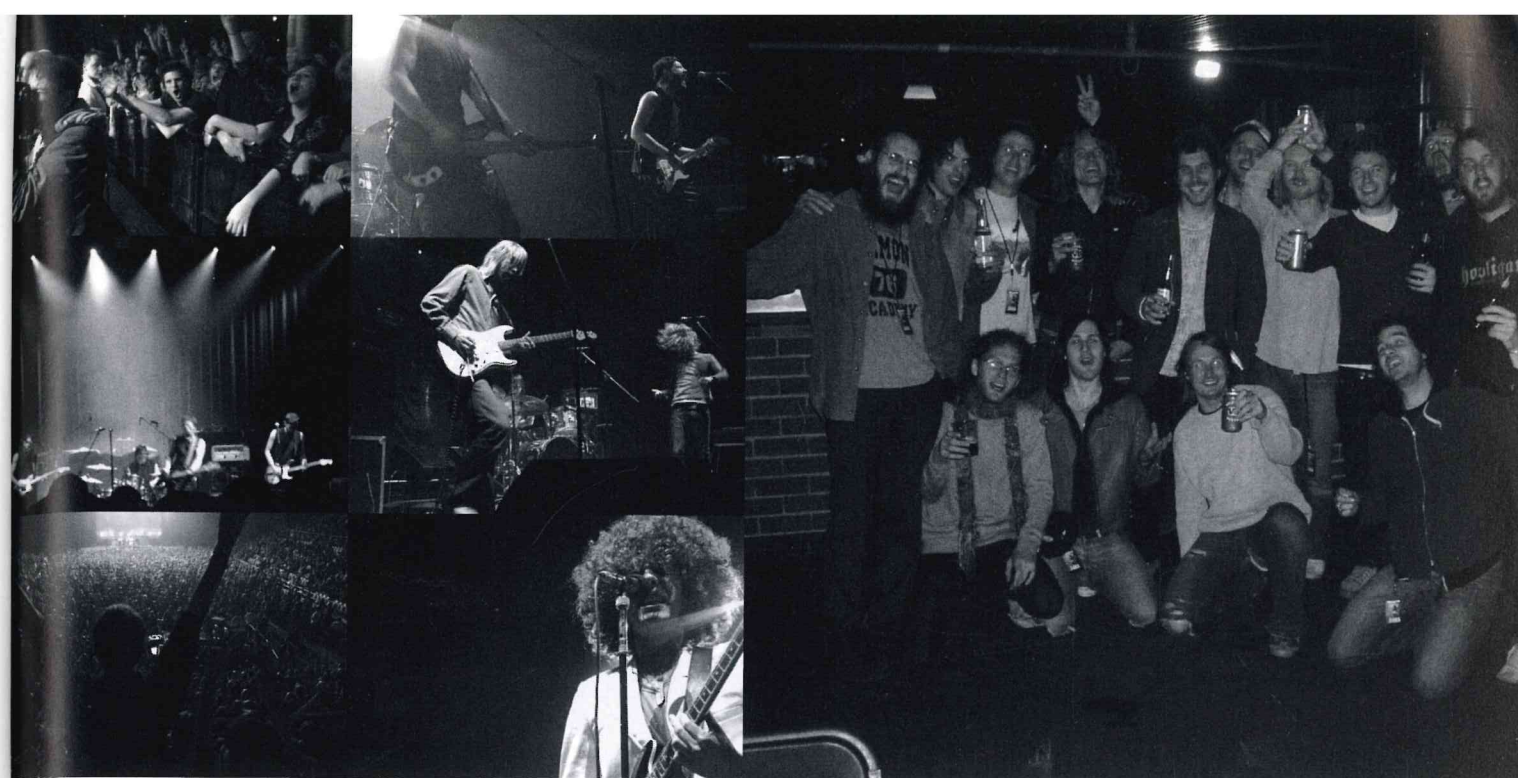
This place is the country’s biggest netball court. If you’ve got a tribally big game planned, you should book this joint for a Sunday afternoon.

We had a 6.30am flight from Melbourne this morning and like the bad boys we are, we misted it. We was still out drinking and drugging, weren’t we? Yeah mate, that’s right: Whoosh. Getting to the airport was horrible, getting ourselves onto a plane to Perf was even funnier. They loved us at the Qantas ‘Check Your Brain’ that morning, we were quite the modern-day-men-boy charmers.

Challenge Stadium is hilariously huge and smells like chlorine. It is so fuckin’ loud tonight I can still hear it. It’s great fun, we play well and people scream at us (both good and bad advice, thanks mum).

Perf, Day 5 Hyde Park Hotel

Tonight is our own show at the Hydey, we are playing with some good buddies and there



are lots of friendly faces and nobody heckles or wants us to get off. There are about 3000 less in attendance than we have grown accustomed to, and it’s rather nice. Back to normal: We spend most of the evening in the car park selling tracksuits and driving from one lonely end of Perth to the other, looking for amplifiers and vowels.

Sidney, Day 6 Horder Pavilion

Today is Andrew from WolfFingers birthday (he’s 49). There is to be a party after the show. The wolvers and wolf-crew all have glitter in their eyes; there are whispers of a special night.

The first person I see when I arrive today is Johnny Knoxville. For a grown man, I am way too excited about this. I call my mum. She tells me to eat some food. The *Jackass* dudes are here to do a video clip for the “Joker and the Thief” with the Wolfangers. Stevie O, Wee-man, Bam Margarita and the Big ‘guy’ are all here, beating the shit out of each other and covering each other in beer, piss and shit. Totally awesome, dood.

There is lots of stuff happening tonight that to us seems superfluous to getting merry and having a good rock show: Boo-hoo. The place is full of Channel V, MTV and *Jackass* folks. This means extra leads and wires and rules and eggheads. We trip over all of them. We play really well again and are met with nice applause and clap claps.

Backstage tonight is the most nuts it has been all tour, us and the Dooonyang men are more or less as we have been at the end of every night (wobbly), but everybody else is ready to get shaky as well. We all head to Ruby Rabbets, a club in Darlinghurst, and flash our magical ‘AAAAAAA’ Wolf-finger cards and are escorted upstairs to Lala land. Tonight it is an open bar (all three shelves), free food and four shady Tendon-men who are here to help you with what would you like? It’s a glorious party; one moment you are sharing a daiquiri with a dear friend, the next you are wolfing a can bong with Stevie O in the female toilets, the next you are a Columbo-Mex-Argi-Helicopta-Mechanic. Sniff.

Sidney, Day 7 Horder Pavilion

Today’s show is a dizzy repeat of last night. It seems as though every body else is struggling from the effects of the party, as they should be Caroline. We are not feeling any ill effects however. In the fierce sport known as ENDLESS PARTY we are known for our meticulous planning and vision, especially myself and Ticky Touchwood. We bring enough POWA to ensure a righteous party ensues, all evening and all the next day.

Ticky and I share a bottle of scotch after our show while we talk at music impresario John Watson as he watches Wolfinger. We sit on either side of Mr. Watson, and deliver no-stop babble and yammer in his ears and spit at his ears about us, our band, our label, our videos, our songs, our records, our preferred songs

to play live, our band members and their financial problems, our relationships and the fact that we think all our band members are cunts until we pass out from too much blood pressure to the head and too much sweat on our red faces. We think he might call soon about some sort of deal.

Brisbann, Day 8 THE LAST DAY River Stage

I wake up on the way to Brisbane. Dimples and the Hush are cuddling me. Ticky is dancing in the aisle of the plane. Dimples tells me he has used my credit card to book a penthouse in Brisbane, as a special treaty for the last night. Tonight’s show is outdoors at the Brisbane River Stage in the city’s Botanical Gardens. It is quite amazing and easily the most spectacular pub we have played in. Tonight’s crowd is a lazy 6500.

As always, the Brisbane kiddies are a little looser than elsewhere; tonight has a boozed up Mad Max vibe. They like us; they like doonyang and they absolutely love the Wolfinger. We invite the Doonayang crew back to our suite for an evening inside the bubble. We spend the evening throwing paper airplanes down onto the freeway below. Ticky and Mathias Dooyanger develop a new musical enterprise: *Commercially attractive and economically sensible humming inside the bubble*. We both agree to be more like each other. The sun comes up. Hi.

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Favourites with Jeremyville



ALMANAC. September / October 2006



The Crayon Fields
Animal Bells

Album
(Trifekta / Chapter)

Shane Moritz

Succumbing to *Animal Bells* is easy. As easy as succumbing to a sensuous Thai foot massage or kissing someone you fancy? Easier.

Animal Bells is a once-in-a-lifetime invitation into a pretty, animalistic city of bells, toys, chimes and precocious timing; where lovely guitar Pop announces itself with an unfeasibly pretty P and twelve wondrous tunes faerie floss your ears for flipping eternity. This is one precious album and it feels endangered like a koala or maybe even a Chills' single from '82. Cherish it fondly.

A short time ago, the Fields were in high school, or at least original members Geoff and Brett were. After producing two EPs (the unremarkable 'Worms' and the very good 'Good Life') they got their bells off live, lost a member, gained two (Neil, whose beats swing and Chris, a ninja-like guitarist and percussionist), cut an excellent three-inch and have since blossomed into a phenomenon. This LP is the natural leap and it's a classic.

Listening to 'Living so Well' I can see myself marketing a children's jewellery box to true stylists. The song could be called 'The Good Life Part II' — it's a salubrious din, sporting a louche keyboard that is very Lee Hazlewood at the pool. In fact, California is all over this album: it's in the sweet, 12-string chimes; it's in those sweet, utopian harmonies; and it's in the whirlwind Pet Sounds that Geoff O Connor



hears in his head; he's got chronic addictions to mellifluous melodies. The medicated lilt of this rain-streaked, sun-glazed set connects Arthur Lee to The Clientele. Melbourne counterparts Minimum Chips are in there too and so is Royal Chord. 'Helicopter' is propelled by the wings of a fantabulous keyboard, smiling down on a Sleepy Township. 'Potholes' is the unlikely marriage between a jagged Julian Teaklesque-riff and a luxurious Minimum Chips-style groove.

Geoff's whispery falsetto registers high in the mix as if calling from a higher place. "I still want impossible things" he sings and the band, clapping along happily, make a wish and you half expect a Unicorn to come waltzing into your lounge. 'Lovely Time' features two Minimum Chips, a cloudburst of percussion and a lovable merry-go-round keyboard melody that keeps coming back like a boomerang long after the song ends.

"Make the carpets purr like possessed exotic fur," Geoff commands the Fields on the opener, 'A Choir of Tiny Boys', and they respond with a Persian Cat-like brew of mystique that makes the hair on the back of your carpet stand up. 'Would It Be So Strange?' follows and it finds Geoff in a deceptively-wistful mood, wondering what it would have been like if they had done what they say they'd do, but I'd say, "Hey you're doing it young people and it ain't that strange". It's unimaginably TOPS.

068 REVIEWS

Crook marvels at Tim Steward's staying power, Mathieson gets cuddly with some Perth Pandas and Trajstman celebrates laptop power over gearbound snobbery. And more and more and more...

073 ON PLAY

David Nichols recommends *Happy Lonesome* to Neil Young and remembers *Kahvas Jute*.

076 RETROSPECTIVE

You Am I's studio output gets a critical once over from Darren Levin.

They've snuck them out even earlier this year — Christmas tree baubles line the walkways of department stores and Santa's holed away trimming his beard. And we're right behind them because now, in September you'll note, the *Mess+Noise* Almanac offers up 35+ gifts from our reviewers to you. There's something for everybody — positive reviews, negative reviews and a fine line in critical diplomacy. Don't be afraid, rip the ribbon off and take a look.

ALMANAC

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ALMANAC: Music For Your Day



Wolf and Cub *Vessels*
Album (Dot Dash)
Eliza Sarlos

Somehow Adelaide breeds a unique blend of genre smarts and isolation-inspired innovation – all things that I would have previously applied to the city of churches' Wolf and Cub. For their debut long player, *Vessels*, it seems they've dropped the innovation by the wayside and instead embraced virtuosity as their new yardstick – and while I'm usually a cynic when it comes to having a 'by numbers' approach to anything, this record seems better for it. Taking psych-rock as their cue, Wolf and Cub create a world in stereo, displacing the listener, mastering the epic and practicing conciseness simultaneously. It's a combination that's rarely achieved in any derivation of rock, and never with this much elegance. For once, a record worthy of the hype.



Ned Collette *Jokes and Trials*
Album (Remote Control)
Pat McGrath

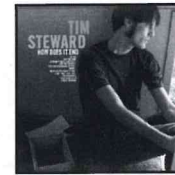
City City City was a model choice for the demanding Friday dusk slot at Meredith last year. The band's measured advance from post-rock to psyche-rock, replete with choreographed lighting and (guitarist and occasional vocalist) Ned Collette's climatic eruption into cross-stage Jagger-swarmer, served as a perfect cleavage between the milder afternoon build-up and the more energetic acts to follow. Collette's first full length album, *Jokes and Trials*, is similarly successful in its affecting use of contrast, swerving unexpectedly from the conventional Leonard Cohen/Nick Drake inspired folk route to more experimental terrain chartered by the likes of Courtney Tidwell, Mark Kozelek and Jim Noir. While Collette's improvisational guitar schooling is apparent in the unique structure and tonality of 'Boulder' and 'The Laughter Across the Street,' *Jokes and Trials* is well tempered by an equivalent emphasis on lyricism: there are very few moments where Collette is not singing in his distinctive, quivering baritone. 'Song for Louis' and 'Blame' demonstrate his understanding of his voice as another instrument – something to not only complement the nylon string melodies of his guitar, but also to follow them closely and consciously. The resulting interplay gives *Jokes and Trials* a deliberate yet intuitive quality, revealing Collette's thoughtful and innately eccentric approach to folk music.



Toxic Lipstick *Prisoner Of Hormones*
Album (Dual Plover)
Adrian Trajstman

Peakers and tweakers alike unite! Australia's original ecky-jawed badgirls are back with their second full-length, jammed to the brim with foul 'n' feisty skag-tech rapdowns and banger carnavalesque delights. These teen idols are ill at ease spewing giggly rushes of crass peer group pressure over BPM rapidfire and mongoloid 8-bit brutality. They wrangle themes of incest and cow birth on 'Cuntry Lovin' and squeal on heat for chaos and man-meat throughout 'Put It In', which surges like Sigur Ros scoring *Mortal Kombat* porn. 'Tracey's Slumba Party' is included on this disc as well as on their excellent debut – with overworked smartchord arrangements and a sing-song vocal delivery, Toxic Lipstick are somehow able to make

'poon' seem like the most relevant word in the English language. Forever young, these globe-trotting marvels present the Australian youth experience through a hot pink lens, aiming digital guns at a mile-long shitlist of disillusioned yet totally hot sluzzas and bevans. Puberty is a battlefield.



Tim Steward *How Does It End*
Album (Reverberation)
Andrew Crook

Confronted with the emaciation of the 'J culture' that sustained them, Screamer barely batted an eyelid. Their overdriven, hyperactive, good-time pop spewed forth with alarming regularity even as the kids ebbed away. Twenty-one singles later, Tim Steward could easily exit stage left, his popscene legacy preserved for anyone with a 'whatever happened to?' Google fetish. *How Does It End* is a motley bunch of solo tracks recorded during Screamer's downtime. Some tunes appear to revel in their derivativeness: 'What Are You Doing to Me?' was "inspired by Guided By Voices," 'The Difference' channels Pollyanna and opener 'Before' could easily be late-era Elliot Smith. Steward hits his foppish straps on the chugging, layered efforts that most echo his ongoing concern. The otherwise impressive 'Not the Same' screams out for the Kellie Lloyd chime-ins that never come. The addition of a few awkward introspective numbers suggests Steward should stick to his strengths. Even if few people are listening.



Khancoban *Khancoban*
EP (Half A Cow)
Pat McGrath

Khancoban take their name from a small town in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains that was built to house workers during the construction of the hydro-electricity system. Much like the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the Melbourne band's debut is an exercise in meticulous planning, originality and patience. After all, making sparse, downbeat folk-pop requires time and fortitude, and it is a task for many hands, yet *Khancoban* is most striking for its simplicity and restraint. The slow-burning opener, 'These Lines can be Traced', could easily affect the ostentatious dream pop meanderings of Mercury Rev or Sigur Ros, but settles for the forgivable self-doubt and shyness of Augie March or Cocteau Twins. The EP progresses through various shades of acoustic and electric folk, ornamented with touches of slide guitar and piano, and while it is at times lyrically mournful, *Khancoban* never becomes desperate or overbearing. Husband and wife duo Andre and Jemima Hooke's vocal harmonies mingle with a tenderness that comes with the intimacy of shared lives and love, and on 'Take Me Where I Might Want to go' they venture into territory once the solitary preserve of Low.



Bertie Blackman *Black*
Album (Morph / MGM)
Andrew Ramadge

Spare a thought for bands out of time, not in rhythm but style. *Black*, the second album from Sydney's Bertie Blackman, sounds like a flashback to the late 90s, driven by sailing-then-snarling female vocals and backed by a stripped-back, grungy rock sound. Her lyrics are

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angsty – even when they're tongue-in-cheek – with a ponderous, navel-gazing fascination about them. There's no doubt Blackman – from a family of artists – is aiming for something higher, but she's yet to hit it. Still, there's always been something about a feisty girl with an axe and a pen, and those who enjoyed this sound the first few times around probably will again. Blackman ups the tempo well on 'Fast Bitch,' which rolls on like a rusty bomb without brakes between speed bursts, and hits a few dark, groovy jams elsewhere. Fans of Killing Heidi should take note.



Dallas Crane *Factory Girls*
Album (Sony BMG)
Adrian Trajstman

Here come Dallas Crane! That band you hear in pubs! The band that rock around the clock. They know what they're doing with the way they finger their guitars and their songs have all the sweet hooks to keep our nation's stubbly rockdogs and everyday John Citizens alike very interested. This dedicated and seemingly omnipresent contemporary Australian rock band release a proficiently played, well-produced album with potential singles and buoyant choruses, tight as a tiger with no loose screws. 'Kiss It All Goodbye' is a charming stand-out, its mid-tempo dance beat primed for a house-party playlist, whereas the dark and shadowy lead single 'Curiosity' is worthy of note for paraphrasing Devo's 'Girl You Want'. It seems many Australians have always held this style of rock music close up to their collective bosom and the initials AC/DC might as well be updated to stand for 'Australian conventionalists Dallas Crane'. A new direction? Psy-trance remixes? Never. 'Insane in the Dallas Crane'? That I would like to hear.



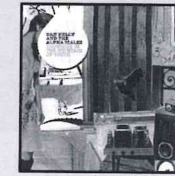
Singing Sadie *Songs For Swingers!*
Album (Dual Plover)
Adrian Trajstman

Meet Sadie – hailing from the East Coast, she's just your average all-singing, all-dancing cabaret fruitcake. With her OTT cat scratch voice and brash, nihilistic attitude, she reminds us just why the depression was named so – her spiky little showtunes are like gems gathering dust, on a mantle-piece in some far-off locale. She is so removed from everything that's going on in pop today yet still she remains uniquely captivating and her tunes have all the dirty attraction of old-time jazz. She is one part Poly Styrene to one part *Eraserhead* radiator lady – she's beauty and beast combined. Watch out for her tap shoes because it'd surely sting like a bee if she swung a roundhouse to your shins. Not very really 'ladylike' now, but thank heaven's Sadie's here to smash your expectations channeling all the misplaced cheeriness of the 1930s. A timeless oddball with no limits and limited dignity. Time machines do so exist!



My Disco *Cancer*
Album (Numerical Thief / Stomp)
Ben Gook

There's caustic intensity in every moment of *Cancer*, My Disco's brief and impressive debut album. They've conjured the sound of



Dan Kelly and the Alpha Males *Drowning in the Fountain of Youth*
Album (In-Fidelity / 2006)
Pat McGrath

"This is our new bassist, Lewis Boyes," Dan Kelly told a packed Melbourne band room soon after the amicable departure of The Drones' Gareth Liddiard from Alpha Male bass duties. "And what a lot of people don't know about Lewis," Kelly went on, "is that he is made of spiders." "That's right!" Boyes added, waving his hands above his head. "I'm made of spiders!" Nobody in the audience had any idea of what the hell the two were talking about, but it was still funny. In-jokes, no matter how obscure or exclusive, are just funny sometimes. And with song titles like 'My Brains are on Fire!' (Life Coach Baby), 'Baby Sitters of the World Unite!' and 'The Lonely Coconut,' Dan Kelly and the Alpha Males' *Drowning in the Fountain of Youth* is practically glued together with in-jokes. Since 2004's somewhat solemn *The Tabloid Blues*, the Alpha Males have flourished from a dutiful backing band for Kelly's uniquely sensitive yet at times extroverted pop, to a four piece ensemble of equally flamboyant pranksters who clearly spend too much time together. But while close quarters certainly breeds impenetrable personal humour, it also does wonders for group dynamics. Consequently, *Drowning in the Fountain of Youth* is very much a group effort, and although Kelly wrote all the songs (except for 'My Brains are on Fire,' which is co-written with Boyes), they are not his alone. 'I Will Release Myself Unto You' and 'Fire and Theft' stand out as examples of a band entirely in tune with each other's talents, and one very much capable of broadening Kelly's ambitions for the experimental scope of pop music. In the end, musical dexterity outdoes monkey business, and *Drowning in the Fountain of Youth* is a deftly executed pop album, written with summer in mind and good humour in tow.

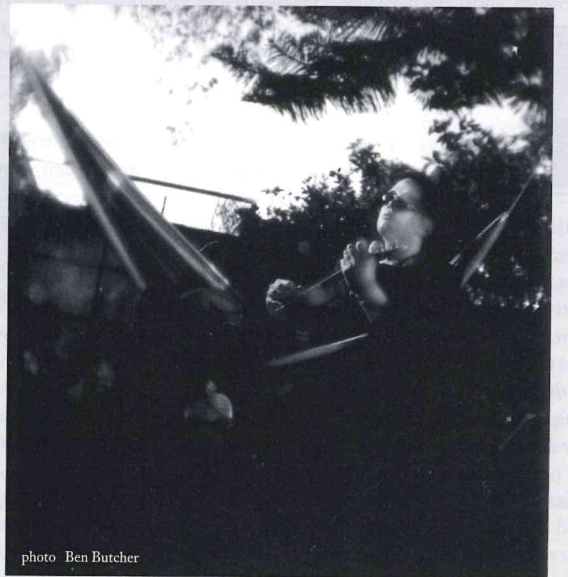


photo Ben Butcher

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dancefloors in some post-apocalyptic psych ward, where robot nurses and autistic children groove to overdriven bass, guitar feedback and rock-vs-dance drums. In Ben Andrew's spidery guitar work there's always the threat of chaos – but the rigid menace of the rhythm section keeps goading him to *not even think about it*. Bassist Liam Andrews falls easily into danceable rhythms but also provides the band with their strongest melodic hooks. And Rohan Rebeiro's work on the drums is never less than stunningly inventive. He has the unique ability to use each part of the kit to texture and percussively accent rhythms that lesser drummers (and bands) would miss. If their earliest gigs saw My Disco pinned as Shellac-wannabes, *Cancer* proves their ability to transcend those all-too-easy tags. This suite of songs – littered with the abstract lyrical afterthoughts of a band member's eponymous illness – sees their unique musical template pursued to impressive ends.



Christopher Hale Ensemble & Josh Roseman
Kodály (We Are None Of Us Precious)
Album (Unstable Ape)
Adrian Trajstman

Downtown New York improv master Josh Roseman joins the Christopher Hale Ensemble to raise a glass to Hungarian composer Zoltan Kodály. There are moments of relief all throughout this fluid little album as conversational passages flow and drop with exquisite grace and poise. Opener 'The Bitter Watches' unfolds and expands at a comfortably lazy pace, Roseman delivering sun touched melodious trombone phrases over progressive, playful piano combinations. 'Swamp Form' sees Hale patting out a rootsy sonic foundation on his bass with regular solemnity, whereas the following track, 'Callino Bells' gives him an opportunity to express tunelessly amongst a wash of chordal gold courtesy of William Poskitt on the piano. Throughout the album, cellist William Martina constantly manages to imbue his deep, sweeping tones with an air of peace. This is not an exercise in space-age freakouts, but rather an incredibly open, infinitely inviting earthbound release.



Merle Morris *I Like It*
Album (In-Fidelity)
Pat McGrath

You don't have to trace Merle Morris' family history very far to find the source of their mania – drummer Danny Heifitz once played with Mike Patton's psychedelic narcissists, Mr. Bungle, and samples-geek George Turner is SPOD's resident keyboardist. While the Sydney band has not quite inherited the outrageous showmanship of its antecedents, *I Like It* reveals a predisposition for frantically strummed guitars, lighthearted lyrics and casual genre-swapping characteristic of a certain bloodline. Merle Morris specialise in pop-punk diluted with doses of clunky synthesisers and occasional unexpected foray into what can only be called instrumental trip-hop. 'Frost Freeze', yet another song about working in supermarkets, is reminiscent of '90s grown-up punks, Not From There, while 'Exodus' sees the band making a somewhat timid venture into experimental sampling and something they like to call 'futuristic banjo'. Finding a balance between these is no easy task, and in its eagerness to consolidate the many traits of its genetic makeup, *I Like It* never quite reaches equilibrium.



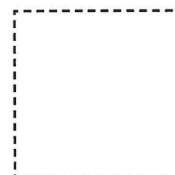
Radiant City *Radiant City*
EP (Wireless Records)
Ben Gook

If in 2002 Melbourne swelled with the sound of a hundred instrumental guitar bands simultaneously stepping on delay pedals, by mid-2005 the city had decayed to normal size. The scene withered on the vine because the ideas ran dry – there are only so many pretty guitar arpeggios to go around. And now we're largely left with those bands who have something valuable to contribute – or those too belligerent to think otherwise. Thankfully Radiant City, a Melbourne-based guitar and drums duo, have the ideas and smarts to make their debut EP a solidly enjoyable listen. Unlike some of their old cohort, they aren't afraid to rock, as 'Trans-suburban' establishes. It opens with a Fugazi-styled guitar figure and pounds on creative variations thereof for the remaining three minutes. Self-recorded by the band with beautiful depth and presence, *Radiant City* sounds both intimate and huge. It showcases a group with an innate sense of dynamics and melody. This is a record to file next to *Because of Ghosts*, Melbourne's other remaining post-rock gem.



The Panda Band *This Vital Chapter*
Album (Bamboo)
Craig Mathieson

The Panda Band are music hall troubadours – attracted to those Rainy Day Women and partial to *Pet Sounds*, there's a sense of space on their debut album that you half expect from the latest Perth graduate, but the open ground has left them warm and dazzled by light as opposed to inhabiting the usual arid dreamscape. The sound is involved but never precious: horns, keyboards and guitars are expertly layered together, particularly on the dazzling 'Musical Chairs', where vocalist and central provocateur Damian Robert Crosbie lets his voice build for once. Crosbie is a private romantic and a public satirist. Love is the drug on 'Spanish Bride' and the whimsical 'Lovely Shoulders', while the barbs come out on 'The Jaguar' and 'Sleepy Little Deathtown Toll' as he turns his gaze on the outside world. *This Vital Chapter* is preternaturally clever but absolutely devoid of conceit. That's a welcome combination.



Iota *Beauty Queen Of The Sea*
Album (Black Yak Records)
Adrian Trajstman

This man is not as zany as he'd have you believe, although it's clear he has vision and drive. To an airy soundtrack of tripped jams and radio-rock, iOTA's fourth long-player sees him meditating on his place in the world. Many tracks are primed for radio play and suggest iOTA's been studying hard at the Urge Overkill school of lite-rock. 'Come Back For Me' is powerfully sweet thanks to iOTA's reverbed chorus vocal, and there is genuine longing in his achy delivery. The singer-songwriter encourages telling cynics to get fucked on the easily swallowed chugger 'Go Easy' and kool highlight 'F.E.O.S.' has a dirty buzz to it. Yet despite all the layered guitar, incidental mic pops and feather-light snare shuffles springing forth from the album's tight mix, *Beauty Queen Of The Sea* is only intermittently an exciting listen: it's well produced but ultimately most tracks fail to be arresting.

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Batrider *They Said You're Hideous*
EP (No Promo)
Toby Dundas

Having recorded an album in their native NZ, Batrider made an immediate impact on the Melbourne scene, assaulting unsuspecting locals with their unforgiving live shows and confrontational artwork. *They Said You're Hideous* culls six tracks from their previous album and marks Batrider's first Australian release. It's an assured collection of songs from a band who pull no punches. Sarah Chadwick's vocals emerge like someone stealing their last breaths while being swallowed by quicksand, and the surrounding bass guitar and drums rhythmically batter in a fashion reminiscent of the (sadly departed) Bird Blobs. Standout opener 'Santanana' grows around a cannibal tribe bass and drum pattern, while Chadwick implores us to "jump from the second floor" and the guitars alternate between scything noise and single note riffs. Batrider employ similar tactics throughout the EP and even when they stray into the land of melody on 'Ark d'Triumph' and 'Number One' they still retain a bone-crunching intensity.



Howling Bells *Howling Bells*
Album (Liberation)
Ben Gook

Coldplay probably aren't a band that Howling Bells are readily compared to, yet there is something to the comparison: as last year's bombastic *X&Y* was for Coldplay, the over-produced pomp of the Howling Bells' debut seems like compensation for the underlying dearth of songwriting ideas. On the level of sonics and musicianship alone, the album is flawless girl-led rock-pop – it goes bang in all the correct spots (choruses) and it creaks effectively in all the other unbangy bits (verses). But as a piece of music – fairly assuming that 'music' is something created with emotion, conviction and inventiveness – the album feels lifeless, reduced to a set of postures and rehearsed rhetorical gestures. As the re-branded version of Sydney's Waikiki, this shouldn't surprise anyone with memories of that band. What does surprise is that everyone involved didn't say something before this reached the unwitting public.



Aviator Lane *Aviator Lane*
EP (Patterns In Static)
Danny Griffith

One-man band Michael Radzevicius, a.k.a. Aviator Lane, brings intimacy to a whole new level with his second EP in as many years. The instrumental opening track, 'A New Code,' builds slowly from one lonely acoustic guitar to a mellow choir of organ, spots of electric guitar noodles, computer bleeps and minimalist drum machine. This is about as intense as the self-titled EP gets. But as soon as the vocals appear in track two, 'Comfort Is Shifting', we know where this is all heading – softly spoken, whimsically phrased, bleeding heart music, born of the bedroom recording artist and plonked on a PC. That's not to say Aviator Lane isn't a nice listen, especially when fading off to dreamland. The musicianship is exceptional, with fantastic guitar picking and great arrangement, but the vocals lead it down a path all too often trodden by the lovesick shoe-gazer.



Laura *Every Light*
Single (Alone Again)
Andrew Ramadge

Six-piece instrumental group Laura have been relatively quiet this year, having played only one gig at The Spanish Club in Melbourne and keeping silent about the release of new material. Until now, that is. 'Every Light' is the first single from their second album. In the six months following the release of 2005's *Mapping Your Dreams*, an accomplished but occasionally formulaic debut prompting comparisons to European post-rock groups (Mogwai, Sigur Ros), the band perfected their visceral live show and unveiled a few new, distinctively more abrasive songs during constant gigging. 'Every Light' isn't a great departure from their previous recorded work: it builds quickly into a euphoric tangle of instruments and dies away with reverb. The song will please fans of *Mapping Your Dreams*, but to move past their current niche status, Laura will need to better capture the intensity of their outstanding live act on their second album.



Winduptoys *Double Exposure*
Album (Clan Analogue)
Adrian Trajstman

"Heard enough sensitive glitch-pop yawns cooked up by yet another kid with a laptop and a bunch of soft-synths?" So begins Winduptoys' PR one-sheet. My answer – hell no! I would rather hear clumsy teenage verse over bedroom beats passionately strung together in freeware trackers than chilled old-fart dubscape made on overpriced equipment. Why laud expensive boxes? This is 2006. Music production software is readily downloadable meaning virtually any Australian of any age with access to the internet can empower themselves through music and re-write all the sonic rulebooks. Uh, last time I checked that was a good thing. This duo long to return to a time when "knobs were real knobs and plug-ins were really plugged in", but I for one find the elitism inherent in their gearhound attitude pretty disgusting. It does jack to further Australian electronic music, no matter how pristine, bubbly or spliffacular Winduptoys' textural journey is. Talk about real knobs.



Clunkerfield *Take In The View*
EP (Independent)
Troy D. Colvin

Clunkerfield are an acoustic folk/alt-country-ish quartet who haven't figured out what they're about yet, but are ploughing ahead anyway. They probably find themselves around kitchen tables drinking a fair bit, theorising passionately and listening to lots of Dylan (Bob), Young (Neil) and Sebastian (Belle &). It's introspective and self-obsessed, but falls short of melancholy – which wasn't their likely goal anyway – and we're the better for it. Clunkerfield increase the depth of these half-dozen tunes with thoughtful arrangements: piano for instance, or the gorgeous lap-steel guitar on 'Resigned'. The climactic 25 seconds of this tune, for me, is the highlight of the set; Jimmy Stewart howling to a boozed-up finale, reminding me of The Faces – very cool and very rewindable.

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Greg Nelson *There Is No Cart*
Album (Independent)
Adrian Trajstman

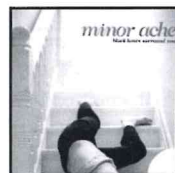
Wire's *Pink Flag* is widely considered a fantastic album because no musical theme outstays its welcome – and the same could be said about

Melbourne-based singer-songwriter Greg Nelson's fourth album. Over the album's twenty-one-and-a-half minutes, Nelson demonstrates that he knows what to leave out, when to shut up and how to craft a decent tune. His paper-thin falsetto is technically flawed yet endlessly lovable and his unashamedly twee songs are adorned with darling excesses – the obligatory xylophone runs and unidentifiable sounds possibly made by household objects. There are tiny surprises everywhere and attractive melodies throughout. 'Dirt' begins as buoyant and fragile as a Mirah tune until urgent drums unexpectedly hop things up a notch, whereas 'Out Of Games' is a softly distorted rock number in the vein of Milky Wimpshake. Lo-fidelity and earnestness should never be considered negative traits – Nelson's music is too sweet to hate and he's too busy being productive to care about hate anyway.



T'N'T: Tim Rogers & Tex Perkins *My Better Half*
Album (Liberation)
Craig Mathieson

Disregard the catalog number – SCAM1 – and the boys-keep-swinging cover snap, the studio collaboration of Tex Perkins and Tim Rogers has an easy charm and the minor swagger of old masters who are aware of the minor distinctions between artistry and arsing about. The original compositions constitute the cream in this case, be it the shuffling skiffle – complete with banjo solo by engineer and session hand Shane O'Mara – of 'Any Old Time' or the melancholic intimacy of Rogers' 'Dinosaurs'. Country blues is the template, with virtually no ampage to be felt. If that sounds righteous, the covers are filler to lessen expectations. Paul Stanley's 'Come On And Love Me' gets played sombre and straight, but Foreigner's 'Turn Me Loose' is hammed up and the closing take on 'Tonight's The Night' is sung by Perkins with an eyebrow quizzically raised. Defence mechanisms come in all shapes and forms, so stick around for the hidden track at the end.



Minor Ache *Black Hours Surround You*
Album (Independent)
Andrew Crook

Flick knives, jagged chords and self-administered stab wounds are making something of an indie rock comeback. While

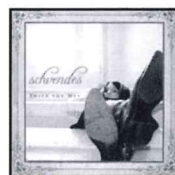
Okkervil River fantasise about 'real knives', the earnest lads from Minor Ache cut to the chase with caustic odes to blood, owls and death-by-clever. This now-defunct 'people from other bands' project smacks of the self-conscious abandonment of bloated Faces-influenced pop for something primarily more purposeful. Although the taut tunes are sometimes overwrought and meandering, there are several hippie-slaying stanzas that make you wish Minor Threat had smashed the state before Britpop ever got a foothold. 'When There's Venom In Your Blood' contains an eerie series of nihilistic directives ("run from this deceased estate of mind...") and 'Slices of Death' is content

to tip toe around the main game in early Death Cab fashion before the crescendo kicks in mid-track. Recommended.



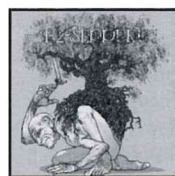
Black Cab *Jesus East*
Album (Remote Control)
Danny Griffith

2004's *Altamont Diary* from Black Cab dazzled the ears with a feast of sounds set against a backdrop of festival noise and dark-hemmed, late 1960s sentiment. It was also one of the first unashamed concept albums to grace the Australian music industry in some years. This time around Black Cab continue their exploration of genres passed with *Jesus East* – an expose of niche rock moments from the 70s twisted together with hazy, meditative Eastern charm. While harder to grasp as a concept than *Altamont Diary*, and more reliant on a primal pulse straddled with constant guitar, *Jesus East* is a fine work from a truly pioneering duo. Interestingly, and almost as a throwback to their previous album, ex-Grateful Dead and Rolling Stones manager Sam Cutler, involved in the organising of '69's Altamont Festival, makes a stirring appearance on the spoken word track 'Valiant'. This moment recalls, as does *Jesus East* in its entirety, the beauty and the harmony of that bygone musical era.



Schvendes *Twice The Man*
EP (Caveman / Reverberation)
Danny Griffith

It takes a few listens to finally get Schvendes, but when it dawns on you, you may feel like an idiot for not seeing it from the start. From the outset, the soft vocals and gentle gothic vibe wash over you like a single gray cloud blowing through the sky. Soon the jazzy guitar tones and Rhodes piano become more apparent, morphing with the whole aesthetic of the sound. It turns from being merely a dark cruise to a visual epic: you can picture the band playing a late night in Dracula's lounge bar. The songs grow from a slinky, sultry beginning, to a full-blown heart-wrencher by the end allowing the six-piece to show off their size in an orchestral whirlwind. While verging on the traditional, Schvendes really shine on *Twice the Man*. The live track makes this EP a great display of their individual talents and combined songwriting power.



1, 2 Seppuku *My Obsession With Jerusalem*
EP (Chatterbox)
Eliza Sarlos

1, 2 Seppuku start off their debut release with a somewhat clichéd vocal excerpt speaking of beer and "art" and the like – think Mogwai circa *Come On Die Young* and you're pretty much there in terms of mood, although the tone seems to be better defined by locating them in the world of indie guitar rock. This Sydney quartet do the sonic exploration thing pretty well, taking mounting guitar lines as a platform to explore the interaction between melodies and extend musical ideas. While it is largely executed with dynamism and enthusiasm, there's a tendency for these ideas to be overstated and indulgent, tiptoeing a little too close to the post-rock stockpile.

ALMANAC: On Play with David Nichols



Neil Young, being a man of taste and good sense, should recruit *Happy Lonesome* as his backing band, and, if he was ever lucky enough to hear their song 'Ramblin' Hearts', which kicks off their new EP, then he would know why. The space boogie of 'Song for the Noismaker' (that's Noismaker not Noisemaker – Noismaker invented the angle grinder) just confirms it and 'Same Old Song, Same Old Shoes' additionally shows that they either like The Fall circa 1980 or they like the records that The Fall liked circa 1980 or they are just as great a rock band as The Fall circa 1980 – probably the last is most true, but make concessions for the second possibility. And, their work shall live on and they're hot live. The only thing that glibly bothers me about them is the truth in labelling aspect – I mean I don't doubt they can get pretty happy, but who the hell in that group is lonesome? (thehappyonesome@hotmail.com)

There are now four *Flywheel* albums in existence, if you count their ten-song 10" released in France a couple of years ago (which I probably wouldn't, but they do). Their album *What to Look for in Summer* is surely amongst the top five albums of the year, a very important chart of my own which I update over and over and which today also includes recents by Sleepy Jackson, Panel of Judges and the Red Krayola. Beginning in Sydney a decade ago, the group have always revolved around main songwriter/singer/handsome man James Dutton and boy genius bassplayer Gavin Butler; the current line-up is easily the best of a long line of greats: a precision drummer, an aesthetic keyboard player and complementarily grouse singer/songwriter in Toby Dutton. (www.karmichit.com)

Comparisons have been drawn between Flywheel, and disparate groups like The Triffids, Buffalo Springfield and the Kinks. I disagree with the first and the second is fair if a little misleading: they don't sound like the Kinks (except they're as catchy and as canny as The Kinks, and listen to a song like 'Cash Cow': I have to say it would have gone to number one in April 1967 the week of release, and yet it doesn't sound remotely retro, just fresh fine craftsman pop). The song 'Holiday' is a ballad of sumptuous proportions that just should not be missed by anyone; 'Caretaker' is a T. Dutton tour-de-force that

is caring and creepy – Christ, that's a delicate piece of engineering. 'Carol's Marathon' sounds like Pink Floyd between Syd and *Dark Side of the Moon*. James' falsetto on 'Sickness Flows' suggests to me that he loves Jack Bruce like I do. The only song that doesn't do it for me majorly is 'Don't Wanna Be Here', probably because it's too close to the bone. I could write forever about *What to Look for in Summer* but everyone would be better off if you just bought it – killer guitar pop that doesn't insult your intelligence, taste or biology.

Kahvas Jute are one of those groups who were clearly the freakin' buzz of 1970 when they quickly grouped, recorded their album *Wide Open*, then fragmented with some kind of weird idea of moving from Sydney to the UK which sort of did but kind of didn't happen. The album is now available, remastered, on the always fine Aztec label. Massively young (well, late teens early twenties) the great sound, style and songs of *Wide Open* make it pretty clear th' Jute were virtuosos in those days when the lack of MySpace distractions and the McMahon government's ban on masturbation meant that young people focused their energies on getting good at things like scouts and rock bands. Dennis D. Wilson's vocals are bold and fluid; I know for a fact that he loved Jack Bruce like I do (I had a chat to bass player Bob Daisley last week; not only were the Jute into Cream, they were into Bruce's massively excellent first solo album *Songs for a Tailor*). When it comes down to it, though, this was a band with its own sense of direction; you have to love the album from the very first line, 'Take the time to launch a boat out on the ocean'. I mean of course I'll take the time to do that! I mean ... what? (Actually, he might be saying 'watch a boat', but let's stay with my interpretation/poor hearing). 'Odyssey' is crazily, funkily skewed; I like stuff like 'Up There', which is just a two-and-three-quarter minute epic with a jazz 'n' axe interlude and gothic trimming presumably intended to aurally equate with stonedness. Woof! 'She's So Hard to Shake' is like the Red Hot Chili Peppers vamping The Doors, only better than either, and the vocal sounds like God's thinking it. By the way the CD also contains five great tracks the reformed Jute recorded live last year.

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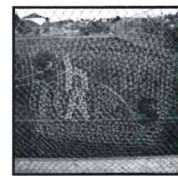
Dane Certificate *Bucket*
EP (Independent)
Danny Griffith

Dane Certificate is the unchallenged King of the Melbourne underground. Independent in all ways, even down to the company he keeps on stage (i.e. his amazing one man shows), he tests the barriers of what could be classed as 'acceptable' music. This is not to paint the man as some whack noise artist whose aim is to annoy the shit out of you, rather Dane's abrasive style cares not for conforming to perceptions of taste. *Bucket*, his umpteenth self-release, is a snippet of current works that rivals the likes of Bob Log III and Digger and the Pussy Cats in the sonic onslaught stakes. Thumping drum machine meets rounded yet aggressive guitar in the title track as his vocals bleed out with powerful resonance. Last track 'RIP Barrett,' a live take from Melbourne's Arthouse, is a devastating romp wielding squealy guitar, a thrashy drum sequence and an almost indistinguishable violin. It's a terrifying offensive that the listener can only liken to (as the title suggests) a sonic paying of respects to another late musical pioneer. Bitchin'.



James McCann *Where Was I Then*
Album (Torn & Frayed)
Troy D. Colvin

The eleven songs here were all recorded in this period while McCann was working in the form of a quartet called the Lowdorados, since broken apart. It's with two of that band's core members, namely drummer John Fenton and guitarist Jim Selene that these songs take their final recorded form. Both McCann and Selene were in the pre-Drones' Gutterville Splendor Six with Gareth Liddiard; significant to both the thematic expression of the material, and the choice of those involved in delivering it. These songs may have been written in cities, but at their heart they're from a remote and searching place, oft recalling the stark beauty of *Nebraska*-era Springsteen. McCann, like Liddiard, places significant emphasis on his lyrical delivery, with the songs ranging from despondency to a heightened questioning of self. *Where Was I Then* encompasses a powerful sense of time, place and community and profits from arrangements of violin, slide guitar and harmonica. It makes for a promising debut; a lovely ride that only gets better with repeated listens.



Shaky Hands *Cut Off Your Hands*
EP (Speak n Spell)
Toby Dundas

If you've ever had a compound fracture you'll know all about spiky shards of bone sticking through the skin at unnatural angles and broken yells through gritted teeth. Shaky Hands debut EP *Cut Off Your Hands* seems to have risen out of the crumpled heap of bones at the bottom of a five-storey fall. Razor wire guitars slice through grooving basslines as mathematically precise drums hold it all together. Just. It feels like it could come unstuck at any moment, but that's the appeal and the source of Shaky Hands undeniable energy. Nick Johnston yelps his way through vocal duties, at times leading the sound too close to the current new new wave obsession. On 'Expectations' he relaxes, going more after melody and the result is 2:20 of perfect pop

choruses, counterpointed by the nervous friction created by the band. It's a song as sweet as that first taste of morphine once the ambulance arrives.



Macromantics *Moments In Movement*
Album (Remote Control)
Eliza Sarlos

When best ofs start cluttering music publications nationally, burn them if they don't include *Moments In Movement* amidst their rateables of 2006. The debut full length from Melbourne via Sydney via Johannesburg heroine Macromantics captures all the life lessons she's accrued, delivering them through some of the most accomplished and stylistically developed hip-hop you'll find this side of L.A. With an unrivalled maturity in terms of social, political and personal consciousness, Macro delivers her astute observations unobtrusively, giving you as much reason to ponder her lyrical vehemence as she does to shake your booty. Her collaborative prowess (with Ground Components, underground US rapper Sage Francis and Sydney producer Tony Buchen, aka Buchman) attests to her versatility, but ultimately it's Macromantics' all encompassing approach that makes her stand out as one of the more exceptional artists around, Australian or otherwise.



Snowman *The Debut Album*
Album (Dot Dash)
Toby Dundas

Opener 'The Black Tide' sucks you down the rabbit hole into a strange subterranean lair and the following 12 tracks form the perfect soundtrack to wandering through a maze of dark tunnels, synthesizing that unique mix of adrenaline and nerves that comes from the feeling you're being followed by something in the shadows. Snowman's music has a strong cinematic quality, their bastard brand of neo-surf rock seemingly influenced by late night horror maestros like Dario Argento and John Carpenter. The other element that creeps in on several songs, most noticeably 'Smoke and Mirrors' is Ennio Morricone's western soundtracks – albeit a Morricone in make-up and false vampire teeth. The production is reverb-heavy but it complements the yells and falsettos, lending them an eerie, unsettling quality. Snowman exude a confidence in their sound that borders on arrogant, the twin vocals slithering between soft spoken verses and explosive choruses, as all sorts of musical mayhem breaks loose around them.

Wolf Eyes / Grey Daturas *The Black Plague*
Split EP (Stomp)
Pat McGrath

This tour edition split EP may well represent the two main strands of the experimental noise helix. Michigan stalwarts Wolf Eyes come from a more electronic tradition, while Melbourne trio Grey Daturas prefer to make their noise through guitars, amplifiers, drums and feedback. It is easy to draw the usual drone/doom metal connections here with Sun O))), Boris and Khanate, but Grey Daturas seem to excel more in the lessons of Slint and John Zorn. They succeed by not just making noise, but by taming it, shaping it, and directing it to wherever their

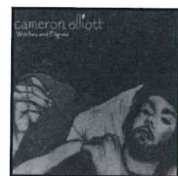
ALMANAC: Music For Your Day

improvisational whim desires. Experimenting with noise can often have unlistenable consequences, but Grey Daturas understand the delicacy required for making guitars sound like falling boulders and for not getting lost in a mire of self-indulgence. Much like 2004's *Dead in the Woods*, Grey Daturas' contribution to *The Black Plague* is unyielding in its search of other abrasions, but knows they cannot be discovered through tiresome rambling.



GB3 *Emptiness Is Our Business*
Album (Rubber)
Eliza Sarlos

The GB in GB3 is Glenn Bennie. Known for his role in The Underground Lovers, Bennie's songs played a defining role in my introspective adolescent years. I can safely say the only thing that's changed in this equation is me, as Glen Bennie still pulls at heartstrings and uses his well-tested methods to craft a record that plays well to the formulas he helped popularise (a mix of atmospheric guitar, pop sensibilities and electronics). The guests Bennie's recruited to flesh out the "3" read well on paper – the instant appeal of Grant McLennan (RIP), Steve Kilbey, Sarah Blasko and Underground Lovers vocalist Philippa Nihil presents a pretty impressive list of friends – but ultimately their contributions fail to bring anything new to the mix. Bennie seems content in recreating the aesthetic he helped define with the Undies, but the relevance of his earlier musical self is sadly lacking in this most recent incarnation. File under adult contemporary.



Cameron Elliott *Witches and Pilgrims*
EP (Television Records)
Ben Gook

Brisbane singer-songwriter Cameron Elliott is afflicted with that dreaded acoustic troubadour curse – the overwhelming desire to tell rather than show. The stories here are signposted with all the blank confessional power of diary entries. Where artists like Hayden and, well, Bob Dylan give loaded details and allow the listener to fill in the blanks, Elliott's work leaves no room for that productive ambiguity of doubt: "Iust cannot lift this weight from my breast / this sickly gre; nothingness that quickens my breath". He sings these lines too in a voice that quivers with all the earnestness of a young man facing black thoughts. The virtuosic flourishes of classical guitar on 'Lust Will Never Last' and the fiddle on 'The Changing of the Moon' attempt to leaven the heavy mood a little, but it's to no avail.



The Drones *Gala Mill*
Album (ATPR / Shock)
Andrew Ramadge

If The Drones' critical acclaim was condensed a single page, it would be more gushing than fa mail to royalty. And if you visualised the surreal horror of *Gala Mill*'s opening track 'Jezebel,' it would be like watchin *Wolf Creek* and *Apocalypse Now* projected on top of each other. The Drones are certainly one of Australia's most important bands, but they're also quite a difficult listen. Theirs is coarse, challenging and emotionally disturbing rock & roll – the antithesis of carefree pop. The band's third studio album is even less immediately likeable than

their previous work, but for those with the patience – and discerning ears – it unravels more majestically. Unchained from the clatter of guitar wails, Gareth Liddiard's lyrics are brought to the fore. On some tracks they stretch to four pages of liner note detail, recalling that other literate misanthrope of pop, Nick Cave. This is a must-have for serious music fans.



The Sand Pebbles *Atlantis Regrets Nothing*
Album (Sensory Projects)
Troy D. Colvin

Rhetorically speaking, who else sounds like the Sand Pebbles? Given that the answer is no one, why don't they have a bigger following beyond being the darlings of critics? The Sand Pebbles haven't yet crossed over to general acclaim; sadly, strangely and much like the whimsical sounds they make, this is plain confusing. There are significant collaborations on this, their third album, but it's less this influence than the actual inventiveness of the music that shines through, although these trippy explorations don't go as far as the listener is led to hope. The album is skewed so that the more 'song' songs outweigh the few spaced-out tunes, but it's in these later compositions that a sense of something really special comes through. The bass-driven Spaceman 3 action ebbs and Pere Ubu-isms pop up ever so briefly. Points off for teasing, but it's the Sand Pebbles who can take the credit for having been so damn good to do so.

+



ALMANAC: A Retrospective with You Am I



Story by Darren Levin

Everyone has a You Am I moment. For me, it was Australia Day, 1996; a support slot with commercial grunge kings, Soundgarden. Melbourne's Festival Hall was at its festive best. A heatwave outside meant sweltering conditions inside, with that ever-pervasive Festival Hall odour – piss of both varieties – choking up the air. The band had just released their watershed album, *Hourly Daily*, and decided to hit the road with a horn section and live guitarist, Greg Hitchcock, to recreate the album's technicolour feel. The show couldn't have been a bigger counterpoint to Soundgarden's bloated dropped-D onslaught. It was authentic and catchy; chiming pop one minute, gutsy rock & roll the next. Rogers, in his dapper mod phase, was self-deprecating and honest, while Messrs Kent and Hopkinson, Australia's most formidable rhythm section, kept everything in check.

I was an instant convert.

At every You Am I gig I've attended since – and there have been many – there's always been an ominous sense of volatility; like one errant chord change or misplaced heckle could spark a meltdown. But they could also translate this combustible energy to record. In their heyday, a blistering four-year period spanning three seminal albums – *Hi Fi Way*, *Hourly Daily* and *#4 Record* – great songs seemed to pour out of them. Even their b-sides should've been hits (see 'You Want It So Bad', 'Boulder Fair' and 'Six'). A true measure of a heart-on-your-sleeve songwriter is their ability to be known by many, understood by few. Through his lyrics and public foibles, stoushes with pseudo-celebs and onstage breakdowns, we all feel like we know Tim Rogers. But, really, all we have are his tunes.



Sound As Ever
Album (rooArt / 1993)

Recorded at the tail-end of the grunge era at the same Minnesotan studio where Nirvana cut their swansong, *In Utero*, *Sound As Ever* was an album compounded by tensions and tragedy.

Box set Jesuit frontman Stephen "Goose" Gray, a long-time champion of the band, died while the band were recording, while drummer Mark Tunaley, who reportedly wanted to push the band in a "harder" direction, was at odds with Rogers, an emerging pop craftsman. The push and pull between both men's vision might have something to do with *Sound As Ever*'s unfinished quality. Then again, it probably had more to do with a band still finding their feet in the studio.

While Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo – who Rogers oxymoronically described as a beer-swilling Renaissance man – attempted to sail the ship sonically, *Sound As Ever* comes across as murky and rudderless. And it took two singles – 'Jaimme's Got a Gal' and 'Berlin Chair' – to elevate the album beyond bargain-bin status. Rogers may not have envisioned 'Berlin Chair' as a hit, but it's become an enduring anthem. Start-stop and vulnerable, it's what being in your early 20s is all about.

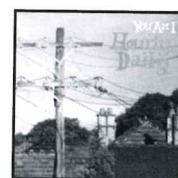


Hi Fi Way
Album (rooArt / 1995)

An engineer's voice. A drum pattern. A blues riff. A Hammond keyboard. Like the Beatles' *Revolver*, *Hi Fi Way*'s

ALMANAC: A Retrospective with You Am I

deliberate false start is instantly recognisable; a measure of how much this album is embedded in Australia's pop consciousness. With like-minded rock & roll purist Rusty Hopkinson on board, Rogers had finally found his Keith Moon – an uncompromising hitter with feel. Such was his admiration for "Rusty" (who provided a counterpoint to Tunaley's belligerence), that Rogers never let the truth get in the way of a good drum fill. Lyrics were frequently altered to accommodate Hopkinson's licks: "Do you sleep on your dick? No, well don't step on the drummer!" was his cheeky explanation. But it wasn't all smooth sailing. Rogers was reportedly crippled by a bout of writers' block, which he eventually overcame by mining his childhood for inspiration. 'She Digs Her', 'Applecross Wing Commander', 'Minor Byrd' and 'Punkarella' are all full of tale tales and half-truths from his early days in WA. Cut from the same mould as Paul Kelly, Rogers is one of few Australian songwriters who can get away with rhyming "beer and fishin'" with "car ignition".



Hourly Daily
Album (rooArt / 1996)

There's something about the cover artwork that really speaks to me. Like the cover of the Replacements' *Let It Be*, which pictured the band atop a nondescript rooftop, the *Hourly*

Daily rooftops could've been anywhere – a cul-de-sac in Croydon, a lane of terrace houses in Kensington or my parents' perfectly mowed Doncaster street.

Equally, Rogers' characters (the tiffing couple in 'Soldiers', the blue-collar worker in 'Mr Milk' and the jaded flat-dweller in 'Tuesday') could've been your housemates or the loud bonkers next door. I've always considered *Hourly Daily* a concept album, and it was of sorts. The stories, gloriously dressed as three-minute pop songs, might not follow any sort of linear narrative, but they weave together a complete picture of suburban ennui. *Hourly Daily* was initially conceived as a "beat" record by Tim and Rusty, who wanted to make music that had a "hop to it, a skip to it; that made you want to shimmy". It was a Kinks-esque blueprint they followed most of the way, especially on the rollicking 'Flag Fall \$1.80', 'Baby Clothes' and 'Wally Raffles'. But the real showstoppers are the mid-tempo numbers – the gorgeous, string-drenched 'Heavy Comfort', a sort of answer to XTC's '1000 Umbrellas'; 'Someone Else's Home', which was strangely left off the import version of the record; and 'If We Can't Get It Together'. Beck (or was it Frank Zappa, or Elvis Costello?) once said that the greatest songs unravel over time. 'If We Can't Get It Together', while not as immediate as singles 'Soldiers', 'Mr Milk' and 'Good Mornin'', has matured into a modern Australian classic. Likewise, *Hourly Daily* is as timeless, intelligent and quintessentially Australian as You Am I will ever get.



#4 Record
Album (BMG / 1998)

For an album about homesickness and transit (Rogers had just moved to Melbourne), *#4 Record* has an unusual knack for making you feel right at home. Perhaps it's the harmonies on 'What I Don't Know About You' and 'Guys, Girls, Guitars', that wrap around you like warm blankets. It could well be "big-name

producer" George Drakoulis' southern touch, or the punchy brass of the Memphis Horns. The album was widely hailed as a return to rock after *Hourly Daily*. And, while it wasn't a quantum sonic leap from its predecessor, *#4 Record* was probably closer to the beat record Rogers and Hopkinson had envisioned for *Hourly Daily*.



Dress Me Slowly
Album (BMG / 2001)

The devastating 'Damage', which name-checked John Prine and had a stylish film clip to boot, was as good as an album teaser as anyone could expect. But it was a false dawn, with *Dress Me*

Slowly, sounding laboured and uninspired in comparison to the band's back catalogue. When I first heard *Dress Me Slowly*, pumped through the speakers of the greeting-card shop where I worked part-time, I was underwhelmed. It was an odd-sounding record, emotionally detached and distant. The back story goes that overpowering record label execs wanted to hijack the record and "make it more commercial". You Am I eventually resisted – and thank Christ they did – but *Dress Me Slowly* sounds neither here nor there. I wasn't sure what to make of Davey Lane's imprint on the record either. Plucked from the internet (he was You Am I's unofficial online guitar tab guy), he changed the dynamics of a band that had existed as a three-piece for the better part of a decade. It would be months before he'd really find his place.



Deliverance
Album (BMG / 2002)

Deliverance was the shotgun Vegas wedding to *Dress Me Slowly*'s pricey extravaganza. A reaction to the prolonged ordeal of its predecessor, You Am I shook off the shackles

and made a gritty record full of one-take imperfections. Rogers, who had recently gotten hitched, played the fragile family man a little too earnestly at times ('Til The Clouds Roll Away'), but his sentimentality was hard to deny ('When You Know What You Want').



Convicts
Album (EMI / 2006)

A Friday night showstopper at the Meredith Music Festival renewed collective faith that You Am I was still a force to be reckoned with. Among the greatest shit retrospective, they pulled out some new numbers including the defiant, guitar-toting anthem 'Gunslingers'. While *Convicts* was yet to be released, the new material held up to the old. And, depending on your loyalty and perspective, it was either an indication of a return to form, or an example of how little they've changed in 17 years. Listening to the album in full, it's a bit of both.

Mess+Noise Questions+Answers

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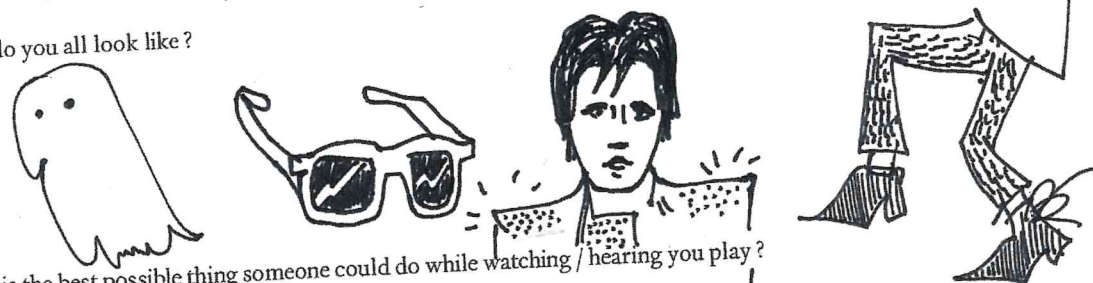
What do you want us to know about you?

WE ARE HUNTERS! WE HUNT DIAMONDS OF PLASTIC AND WE LIKE NEON CITY SCAPES, FOXES AND OWLS AND MISSING CHAIRS... AND WE ARE A BAND.

Why do you do what you do?

Because we are an equal mixture of bravado and anxiety. Who wants to wake up one day at fifty and not have tried!

What do you all look like?



What is the best possible thing someone could do while watching/hearing you play?

Sing along, hold hands, dance, jump on stage (whilst singing & dancing), press rewind to hear the chorus again, light fires.

Is there anyone / anything that has made a strong impression on you?

Brian Ferry's / Edwyn Collins' vocal quiver.
"Parallel Lines", "Seventeen Seconds" "I don't want to go to Chelsea"
"Plastic Passion" "Cattle + Cane" Roto Toms,

Any Band / Artist / Director you have your eye on at the moment?

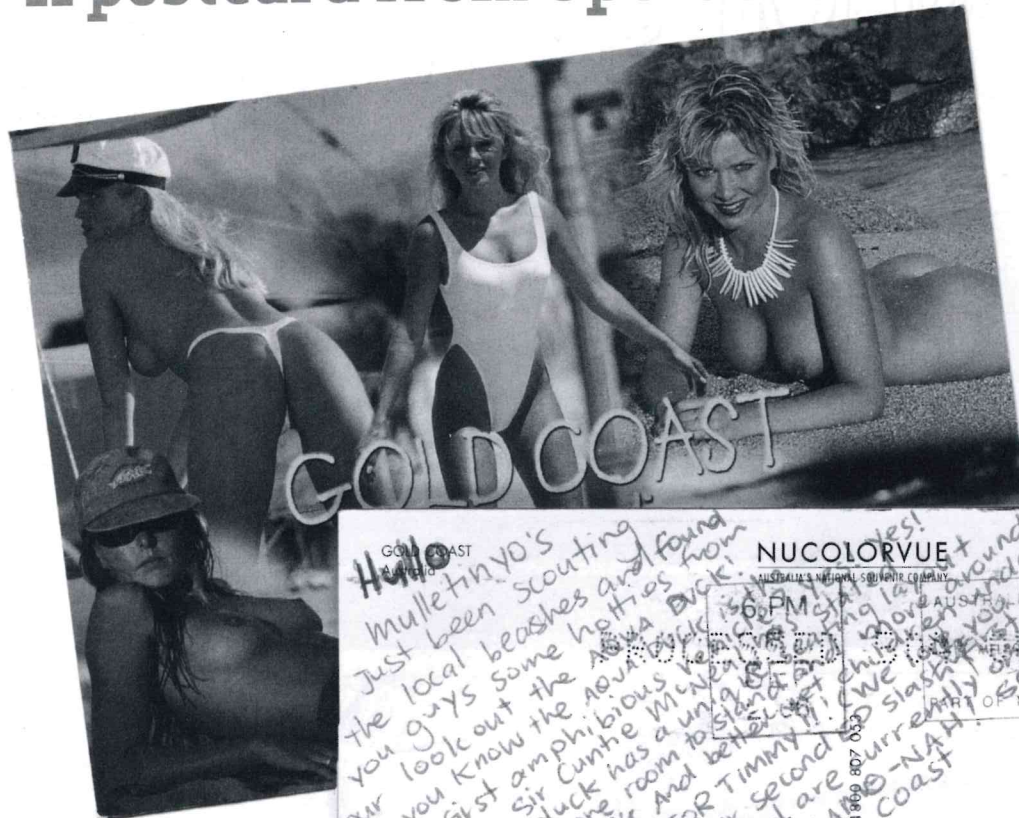
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ALMANAC: Q&A with Tic Toc Tokyo



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Next Issue Issue 10 out November 25

Frankly, we never thought we'd get to issue 10. Actually, we never thought we'd make it to issue 2. But double figures it is, although most of the big names we've asked to pep up the issue - Matthew Reilly, Jana Wendt, that dude from *Dancing With The Stars* - are going out of their way to ignore us. Thanks Jana, we stuck by you during that whole *Sunday* thing...

We do have some great ideas, but we haven't done anything about them. Dan Kelly might write a piece, but we haven't asked him yet. Hey Dan, can you please write something for us? Use 6,000 words, everyone else has. There may well also be stories on Macromantics, Joseph Leonard, My Disco and a tour of Perth courtesy of Snowman. Aleks & The Ramps are also keeping a studio diary, but we don't want to think about that.

See you on November 25.

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T-Rek



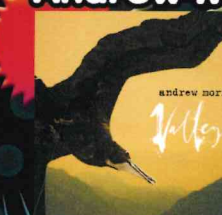
Out Now!

Gallucci



Out October 7th

Andrew Morris



Out October 14th

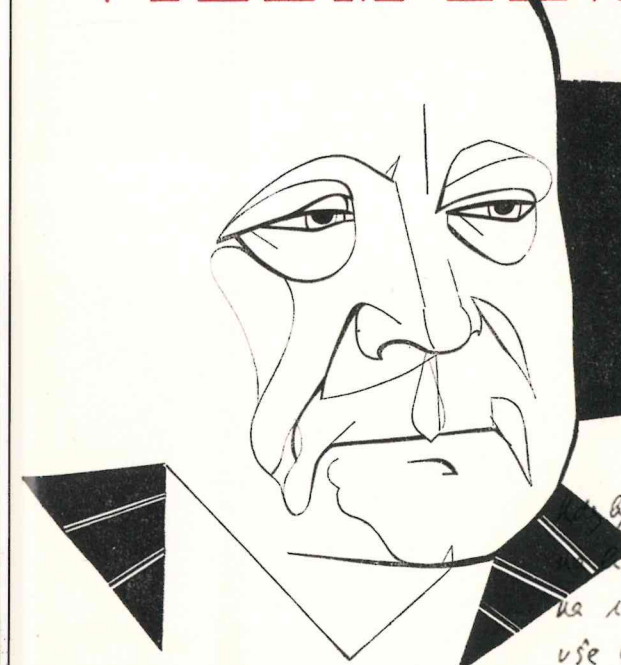
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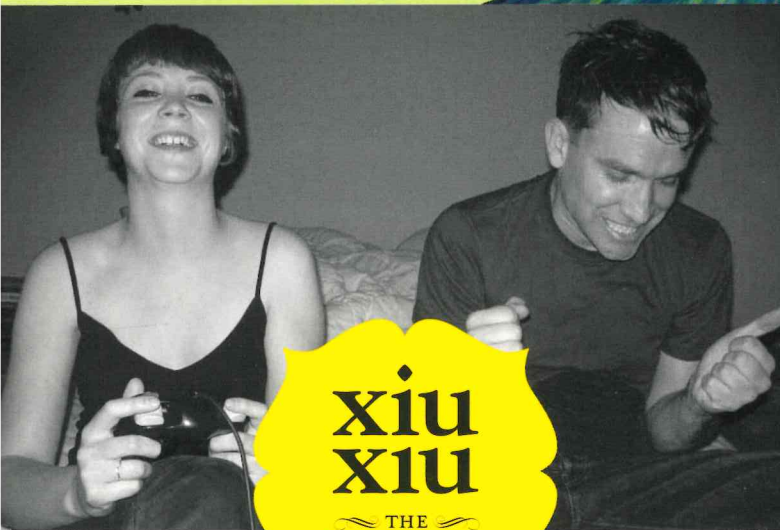
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